



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

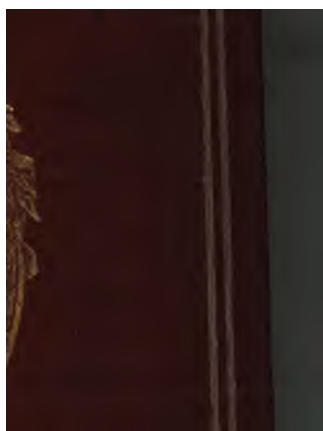
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



1. Filson, England.

}

W. C. A.
Oxenham



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GOD'S PRISONER

[Second Edition]

RISING FORTUNES

[Second Edition]

A PRINCESS OF VASCOVY

OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE

JOHN OF GERISAU

[Fourth Edition]

UNDER THE IRON FLAIL

[Third Edition]

BONDMAN FREE

[Third Edition]

MR. JOSEPH SCORER

[Third Edition]

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L



BARBE

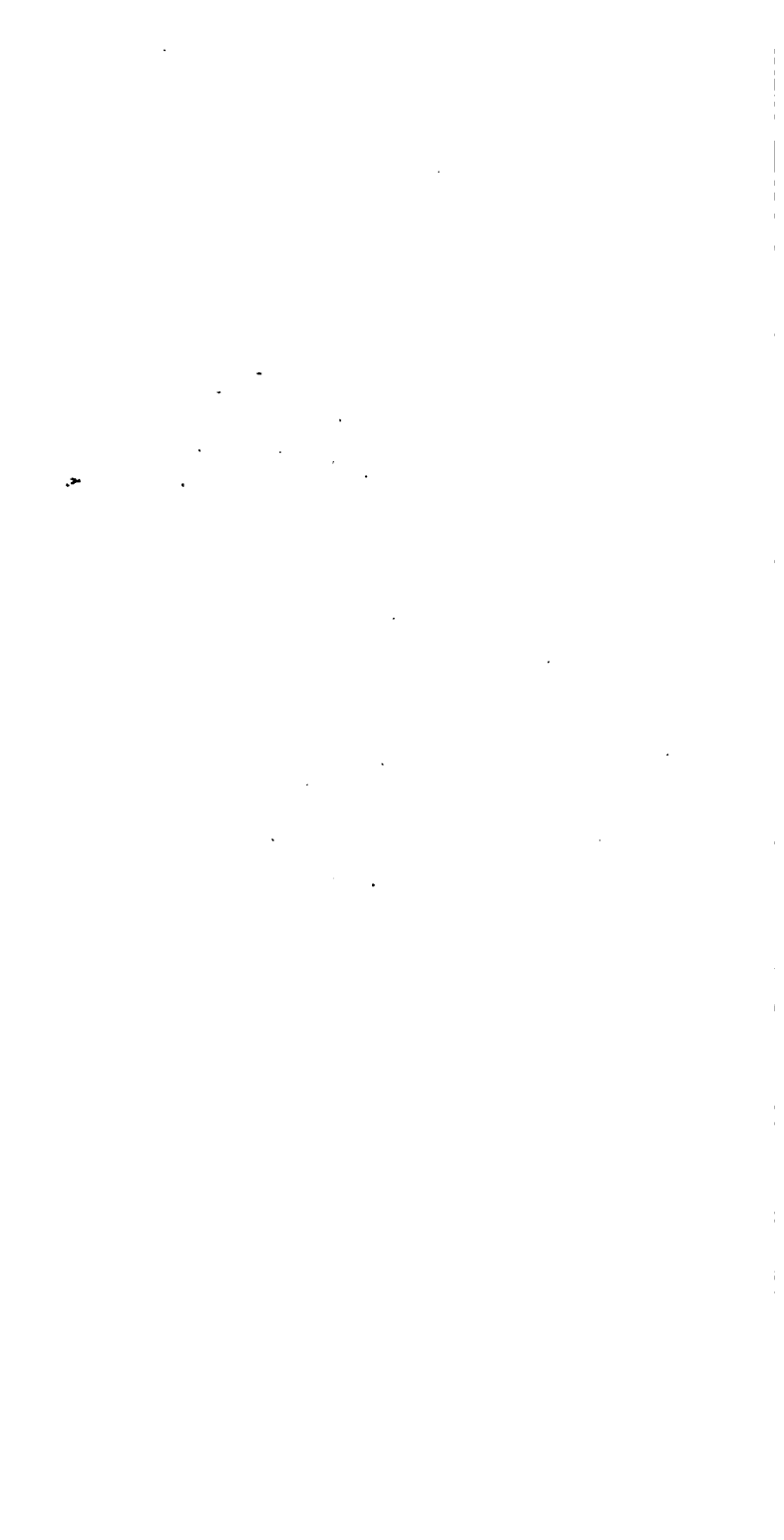
Barbs of Lion and Bayonet

OF OVERSEAS

WAR



BY
H. D. D. D.
AND
L. P. P. P.



Barbe of Grand Bayou

By JOHN OXENHAM, *pseud.*

*Author of "Under the Iron Flail," "John of
Gerisau," "Bondman Free," etc., etc.*



SECOND EDITION

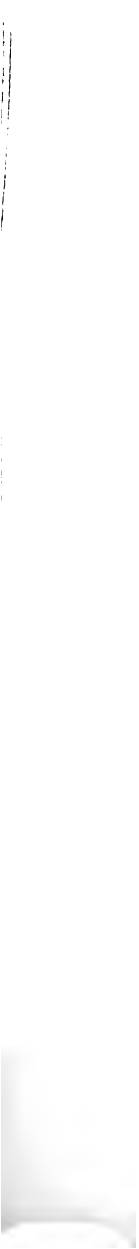
LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON
27 PATERNOSTER ROW

1903

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
158048B
ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1911 L



TO
MY WIFE



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I BARBB	1
II ALAIN	15
III CADOUAL	27
IV GAIN OF LOSS	34
V JOY OF LIFE	40
VI LIFE'S CROWN	58
VII LOVE'S WATERWAY	68
VIII "WHERE THOU GOEST"	72
IX AN UPHEAVAL	81
X HE COMETH NOT	96
XI ANOTHER MISSING MAN	112

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII STRUCK DOWN	127
XIII BURIED	132
XIV LIFE BELOW GROUND	151
XV DEATH BELOW GROUND	161
XVI CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS	173
XVII THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL	184
XVIII ONE RETURNS	194
XIX A BID FOR LIFE	204
XX A GLEAM OF LIGHT	222
XXI 'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —	240
XXII INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY	248
XXIII FROM PRISON TO PRISON	261
XXIV THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE	271
XXV THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC	288
XXVI THE GOLDEN WAY	305

CHAPTER I

BARBE

GRAND BAYOU LIGHT was once the scene of a very terrible tragedy; and the horror of it was heightened by the fact that it occurred on Christmas Eve.

Pierre Carcassone, master-mariner, of Morlaix in Brittany, returning from a voyage to Newfoundland, which had been unduly prolonged by reason of shipwreck, found his home broken up and his wife gone off with a man whom he had called friend, taking with her their two-year-old daughter.

Carcassone was a morose, self-contained man. He made no parade of heart-break, but, having learned all that was to be learned, set off after the fugitives and his missing honour.

He had not far to go. They had believed him dead. Possibly inclination had persuaded them all too easily thereto. Paul Kervec had obtained the appointment of keeper of the Light on Grand

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Bayou. He was a widower with one son, a boy of about the same age as La Carcassone's daughter.

At Grand Bayou Carcassone found them. He reached Plenevec after dark on Christmas Eve, borrowed a boat, and pulled straight out to the tall white pillar with the beneficent halo round its head. He climbed the iron ladder and entered the dark doorway.

Exactly what passed is not for any man's telling, since, of the principals in the affair, Carcassone alone remained alive, and the spectators were too young to testify. Up above, the light shone bright and constant as usual—Pierre saw to that—and down below in the dark the boat from Plenevec ground limpets and barnacles to pulp, and wrestled all night long with its bonds, as though desirous of escape.

In the morning the tall, white shaft stood calm and serene in the Christmas sunshine, and told no tales to Plenevec; but presently Pierre Carcassone descended the iron ladder carrying two little bundles very carefully under one arm. He laid them between his feet in the bottom of the boat, and pulled steadily back to the shore, and the children prattled at the white clouds sailing in the blue sky.

The owner of the boat came down to meet him, and grumbled at the scoring it had got. Pierre threw him a five-franc piece, on which he got drunk that night and attempted to beat his wife, and

BARBE

thereby reaped much sorrow, since she was the better man of the two.

Carcassone picked up the children, and with one on each arm walked up to the village and sought out Monsieur Gaudriol, the gendarme, to whom he said, "I have killed Paul Kervec, keeper of the Light out there, because he took away my wife; and I have killed her also. This is my child; this is his. I am at your service, monsieur."

And Sergeant Gaudriol, thinking it a fine joke, smote him mightily on the back and told him he was either too fast or too slow, since this was certainly not the 1st of April.

At which Carcassone knitted his face, and said again, "I have killed Kervec because he took away my wife, and I have killed her because she permitted it. You had better see to it. Also, find some one to tend the light. I did it last night. It must not to be allowed to go out or some one may get hurt."

Sergeant Gaudriol, looking into his eyes, saw that the man was not jesting, but really meant what he said; and he turned and led him to his house, Carcassone still carrying a child on each arm.

In the result, after all due formalities had been faithfully observed, the jury at Plouarnec, before whom Pierre was tried, found circumstances of great extenuation in his case, as might have been

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

expected. Still, the law had been seriously broken, and two people had been killed. No doubt they had deserved punishment; but punishment is the prerogative of the law. As a warning to others who might be tempted in like manner to take matters into their own hands, Pierre was sent to the hulks for five years.

Life had lost its savour for him, and on the whole he would have preferred the guillotine, except, indeed, for the fact that, if there were a future life—as M. le Curé said—the chances were that he would tumble across Kervec and his wife there; and he had no wish to meet them again any sooner than was necessary.

His baby-girl was taken charge of by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at St. Pol de Léon. Kervec's boy was taken away by an aunt who had married into Strawberry Land, just across the water from Brest.

Carcassone bore the hulks—as he would have suffered the sharp kiss of the slant-edged knife—with sombre composure. When his time was up he returned to his own country, and was received by his own people without any sign of opprobrium, rather as a man who by the hardest of labour had paid a just debt.

He had no wish to return to the sea. He had no desire to live on the land. He had no great desire, in fact, to live at all. He asked nothing but

BARBE

to be left alone: a broken man without a hope or a wish.

The post of light-keeper at Grand Bayou happened to fall vacant, and for the first time in five years he found himself with a longing.

The authorities were at first doubtful; but there was a kind of bizarre fitness in the appointment. They remembered how, even on the night of his outbreak, he had scrupulously tended the light, "lest any one should get hurt." They gave him the post on trial, and never was Grand Bayou light better tended.

He went over to St. Pol de Léon and demanded his daughter Barbe from the Sisters. They had grown to love the child, and would have kept her. But his mind was made up and he would take no denial; and, finally, with tears and prayers, and many doubts for her future, they let her go. They were good women, if narrow, and the little white seeds they had planted in the child's heart had fallen on good ground. The teaching she got in the convent was all the teaching Barbe Carcassone ever had, save such as came to her in wider ways; but it sufficed.

The tall white shaft on Grand Bayou became her world, and she craved no larger one. Life there, in its seclusion and exclusion, was akin to that of the convent, with heaven already added—the wide wonder of the skies above, where the snow-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

piled mountains floated and hung and bore her thoughts away; the nearer glory of the ever-changing sea below; and she, midway between the two, belonged to both, and found in both her heaven.

In such a rare expansive atmosphere Barbe grew and blossomed superbly, in mind, body and spirit.

At nineteen she was a glorious creature: tall and strong and supple; a mighty swimmer in deep waters; learned in the simple lore of sea and skies, whose depths and beauties her great calm eyes seemed, through much contemplation, to have assimilated into themselves.

The sun and moon were her very dear friends; and she had a vast acquaintance among the stars—though, as they had never been properly introduced to her, she had had to give them names of her own which would have astonished the astronomers.

The gorgeous Atlantic sunsets and the chaster glories of the dawn were her pictures. And for music she had the distant, sweet chanties of the fishermen as the heavy boats crept over windless seas in and out of Plenevec, and the sweet, shrill whistle of the wind, and the wild rush of the great western waves as they leaped up the Light, and roared and hissed as they fought in mid-air behind it, and then gathered themselves together and humped their foam-laced backs for the final rush on black Cap Réhel. And of these things she never tired.

BARBE

These were her higher branches of study. In the rock-pools at the foot of her tower were cool water-gardens, where strange and wonderful plants waved tremulous fronds and filaments; and delicately tinted anemones—amber and crimson, rose and white, and rich purple-maroon—studded the dark rocks and gleamed in the broken lights like living gems; and in every pool there dwelt a sweet-faced maiden with eyes like her own, but of a still darker shade, and floating hair like hers, but of a somewhat lighter tint, who started up at her approach, and eyed her with ever-fresh surprise, and then smiled a grave, glad welcome to her.

Sometimes, when she was still but a little girl, Barbe talked with the pool-maidens; but as she grew older she only sat and watched them, while her black cat, Minette, frisked about the rocks all abristle with excitement and with recollections of the time when she clawed at a moving thing in a pool and the moving thing shook hands with her in a way she never forgot.

Through much observation, too, Barbe knew every kind of fish that flashed, like a quiver of startled nerves, round the rock; but they were cold-blooded creatures and impossible friends, and she knew by their eyes that they always looked upon her advances as only the first step towards the frying-pan.

With the birds she fared little better, though they

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

could not, indeed, get away from her as did the fishes. Very sore was her heart each morning when she gathered them up inside the lantern railing, and smoothed their ruffled plumes, and tried in vain to adjust their broken necks, and lavished on them kisses sweet enough, one would have thought, to charm back life even into soft, warm bundles of feathers, and then dropped them sorrowfully one by one into the tide as it ebbed.

Far away across the Creuset rose frowning Cap Réhel, and there the sea-birds swung and circled in myriads, till it seemed as though a cloud of mist hung always on the Head. When the wind blew off the land she could sometimes hear their screaming, and many years' close observation of their movements had taught her when a western gale was brewing.

Her constant and only companions were the black cat Minette and a crippled sea-gull which she found inside the railing after one stormy night, with both wings and one leg broken and one eye gone. She nursed him back to life and christened him Pippo; and Pippo, in return for the food he could no longer seek, did his best to cultivate a spark of gratitude, and flopped after her wherever two broken wings and one leg could carry him, and regaled her with piercing cries under the belief that he was singing, and waged ceaseless warfare with Minette. But sea-gulls are soulless creatures at

BARBE

best, with little to choose between them and the fishes; and even a black cat is not heart-filling, though there is a certain comfort in the soft, warm feel of it; and at nineteen Barbe Carcassone was unconsciously ripe for deeper experiences.

She was fully content with her life as it was. There was no craving in her for a larger one. Her heart had known no hunger, because its fare had always been so simple and its satisfaction so easy of accomplishment.

For the rest, her father was a silent, self-contained man, whose stores of seafaring lore she tapped at times by sheer pertinacity, but always with difficulty. He read much, and she read after him, anything and everything that came her way.

She rarely set foot on the mainland. She had no friends there, for she had had no opportunity of making any. So far she had never felt the lack of them, since her kingdom had yielded her all that she desired.

Twice a week, when the weather was good, her father pulled round to Plenevec for supplies in the rusty coble that hung from the beams in front of the entrance-door. When the weather was too boisterous he did not go, and they fell back on the tinned provisions, of which the store-room always held a month's supply.

Neither Barbe nor her father had ever had a day's illness since she and he went to Grand Bayou.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

They lived, inside, in a concentrated atmosphere of Scotch paraffin from the huge tanks below and the dripping lights above; and, outside, in a counteractive atmosphere of sweet salt air and sunshine, of spindrift and the scent of the seaweed; and the mixture seemed to suit them. Shoes and stockings were unknown to them except in mid-winter; and Barbe's shapely feet and ankles projecting from her short blue woollen skirts were a sight to make a man's blood spin the quicker.

The one time in the year when Barbe Carcassone was distinctly and absolutely unhappy was on Christmas Eve, for on that anniversary her father behaved as he did at no other time, and in a way that terrified her.

He always charged and trimmed the lamps that night with more than usual care. He laboured at the winch till the great weights that kept the light revolving were at their very highest point. Then he ordered Barbe up into the lantern, and himself took possession of the little parlour down below and held grim festival there.

He set out glasses and bottles: three glasses and three bottles—one of rum for Paul Kervec, one of cognac for himself as became a master-mariner, and one of thin wine of Chablis for his wife, because she had shown a mild liking for it during their short married life.

There, all night long, he sat solemnly toasting

BARBE

the dead who had died by his hand, filling the glasses each with its own special liquor, and draining them one after the other till he sank into stupor, or, by some odd twist of the muddled brain, rose in a fury—as happened more than once—and smashed bottles and glasses and furniture as he chased imaginary victims round the room. The while Barbe sat shuddering solidly, with Minette quivering in her arms, on the trap-door of the room above, whither she had been drawn like a moth to the flame.

She heard her father, with whom speech was so rare a thing, speaking now as though to make up for all lost time; and it was strange talk and unnatural to listen to. The man he had down there with him was Paul, and the woman was Barbe like herself. When had they come off from the shore? And why did they never reply to his sallies? And why was she never allowed to see them? Ah, Barbe! it was just as well you should not know.

More than once it happened that the company below fell out, as I have stated, and terror reigned; and more than once it happened that the maddened man crept on his chest up the ladder, with blind hands and groping feet, and tried to come through the trap into the next room—possibly to tend the light as he had done that first night, possibly with less philanthropic intent. But whatever his intention, Barbe's instincts bade her keep him out, and

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

so she sat heavily on the door. And the stumbler on the ladder pushed at it with his head, growling curses, but soon gave it up, and cursed his way slowly down the rungs again; while Barbe, on the other side, prayed earnestly to the Virgin for succour in this time of need, but never moved off the trap.

It was always the same, and had been so since ever she could remember. Christmas Eve was always a curdling horror for her, and Christmas Day a time of gloomy remorse for her father. Then things fell back into their regular routine, and life was bright again—for Barbe at all events—until the evil time came round once more.

Never once during all these years did any mariner come to grief on Grand Bayou for lack of the warning light, though more than one labouring stranger, out of hand through stress of weather, came wallowing helplessly along the Race, and was ground over the Devil's Teeth into the Creuset—the Melting-Pot—which lies, in the shape of a mighty under-jaw, between Grand Bayou Light and the towering cliffs of Finistère.

Then the lonely dwellers on the Light, which stands on the outermost fang of the Teeth, heard the shouts and cries of drowning men—horrible in the dark, more horrible still in daylight by reason of added sight—and were powerless to help. Like higher ministers of grace, they might warn, but

BARBE

could not save by physical means, the souls that went past to their death. Never since they came to the Light had any man who got into the Melting-Pot come out of it alive; but of dead men they had drawn out not a few.

It was in such case that Barbe and her father stood breasting the fury of a wild spring gale one morning, clinging to the stout wooden railing that ran round the lantern, peering breathless and narrow-eyed into the storm. Their eyrie thrummed in the wind, and shook with the pounding of the waves. Behind them the Melting-Pot boiled and churned as though the devil himself were in it; and the frowning cliffs beyond, for a league on either side, stood knee-deep in foam and were white to the crest with flying spume.

A dirty rag of sail which looked no bigger than a handkerchief came bobbing towards them through the gale, and they watched it intently.

It had a meagre chance, which lessened every second. It was palpably in the grip of the Race. If, by good seamanship, by luck, by Providence—if by any means whatsoever—it could weather the Light it was safe. It seemed, like a sentient thing, to be straining every nerve thereto. It grimped to windward inch by inch, and raised the watchers' hopes; then it swirled away in the treacherous current, and lost in a second more than it had gained in the previous minute. Once more it clawed tooth

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and nail up into the wind, only to be swung back towards destruction; till it looked as though the fiend himself had gripped it by the keel, and was playing with it as a cat plays with a mouse.

"It is finished," growled Carcassone at last. "They are done;" and he turned and went into the lantern. He had seen it all so often, and it was not good to look upon.

Barbe clung there still, and looked down pitifully at the little ship rolling past to its doom. The men on board saw her. One of them waved his hand in farewell. Instinctively her own hand rose in answer, and the man below, with death in his eyes, thought suddenly of the priest at the altar when he stands and elevates the Host before the kneeling people. The tinkle of the tiny bell was in his ears, the scent of the incense in his nostrils. Then the Devil's Teeth ripped the bottom out of the ship and the seething water was over his head; and Barbe gave a sob, and followed her father into the lantern, and tried to rid herself of the thought of it by vigorous polishing of reflectors.

CHAPTER II

ALAIN

THE storm held all through the day, but broke in the night; and when Barbe came out into the gallery to watch the dawn, the waves were fawning on the rocks below like penitent dogs licking the hand they snapped at yesterday.

The sea was still dark green, edged all along the cliff-foot with a fringe of snowy lace. The Melt-ing-Pot alone refused to be still; it boiled and tumbled viciously, as it always did after a storm, a thing of evil humour and everlasting discontent.

As the light grew, Barbe's keen eyes caught something on its surface. She gazed intently, then reached inside the lantern for a glass, took one long look, and sped down the ladder to her father's bunk.

"Father!" she gasped—"a man!—on a spar!—in the Creuset!"

"*Eh·b'en!* he is dead," growled her father, who was just getting comfortably warm after a cold night up above.

"Perhaps—perhaps not. We must see."



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Eh b'en! Go along. I will come down," he said, as one duty-driven against his inclination.

Barbe ran down to the boat that hung from the beams by the entrance-door. She had it in the water, first one end, then the other, by the time her father appeared. She took one oar, he the other, and they rowed cautiously down outside the Teeth, where the water came boiling out of the Pot and rose under them in strange, sudden bursts and surges, like mighty jelly-fish leaping at them out of the depths. The man and the spar had got into a corner where things went round and round for days sometimes, beyond reach even of the casting-line. It was impossible to get the clumsy boat in. It was difficult enough to hold it anywhere near the boiling Pot.

"He is alive!" said Barbe eagerly. "I am sure he is alive! See, he moves!" as the spar gave a sudden joggle.

"It is only the water," said her father.

"Oh, how can we get him?" she cried. "We cannot leave him there."

"We can't reach him," said her father. "Besides, he is dead."

"He may not be. We must get him."

"No man ever came out of the Pot alive."

"He looks alive," said Barbe.

"Well, you'd better go for him," said her father,

ALAIN

with grim humour. "I'm not going to drown myself for a dead man."

She hesitated a moment and looked again at the figure on the tumbling spar; then without a word she unbuttoned her skirts as she sat, and shook herself free. For one second she stood with one foot on the gunwale of the boat, a glorious figure, clad only in the modesty of an angel bent on an errand of mercy and a coarse cotton shift which the morning breeze flapped gently about her shapely legs. Then the boat shot away at her kick, and she was slipping deftly through the broken water at the edge of the Pot.

The Race ran strong, but Barbe knew every trick that would mate it. She swam like a seal, and Pierre edged along as near to the outer rim of the crucible as the heaving coils would permit.

Barbe hung there just outside the corner pool, which swirled slowly and swung to and fro, and boiled, and showed a different aspect every second, and each one worse than the last, till the spar and the man came bobbing along her way. It was almost within a long arm's-reach when some sudden twist from below shot it away, and she had to wait till it came slowly round again. She waited, poised for a leap as it were; then she dashed in and flung one white arm over the man's body. His face was leaden, his lips blue; but he opened his eyes for a moment, and said "*Dieu!*" and then closed them

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

wearily, for which Barbe was glad. She struck out vigorously for the outermost circles. The writhing coils below tried to grip her; they belched up in her face and spat at her, and flung her to and fro. The man and the spar were like an anchor to her; but she had got them. They were hers, and she would not let them go.

Twice she circled the pool, but each time nearer to the outer edge. She pushed through at last, and the Race carried her down to the waiting boat. She shoved the man and the spar alongside, and hung to the gunwale, panting and rosy red, with all her hair afloat about her like a nymph of the sea. Pierre let her hang while he drew the man in and laid him face down in the bottom of the boat. Then he took her two hands and braced one foot against the gunwale, and she scrambled in and had her petticoats round her before his oar was in the rowlock.

Getting the waif up the iron ladder was a matter of extreme difficulty for them. And at last, after much cogitation, Pierre bound the man's two wrists tightly together with his silk necktie, and putting his head through the looped arms, carried him up like a sack of flour, and laid him in a spare bunk in the sleeping-room. He was limp and sodden, and sorely bruised with his twenty hours' cold boiling in the Pot.

Pierre hurried Barbe away to get dry clothes for

ALAIN

herself and hot cognac and water for the newcomer, and then proceeded to maltreat him back to life—the first man that ever came alive out of the Pot, and so a curiosity.

Barbe, dry-clothed, with life exuberant bounding in her veins and glowing in her face like a halo—though the eyes of common flesh might not perceive more than that she looked wonderfully beautiful—came in with hot soup and cognac, attended by Minette and Pippo in a state of much excitement and expectation, and stood watching while her father administered the stimulants drop by drop to the patient.

There was a new, deep light in her eyes as she watched—a light very nearly akin to that which shines in the eyes of the young mother as the downy head of her first-born nestles up to her side. The mother-heart in her was stirred. All unconsciously she was tasting the joy of maternity—with none of its pains indeed, yet with all its gratitude for dangers passed; for at risk of her life she had given life, and she felt as though this new life belonged to her.

Moreover, though her range of comparison was of the smallest, it was a very comely piece of humanity that lay there in the twilight of the bunk. A long, straight-limbed figure, well knit and strong, though limp and lax enough at the moment; young, too, with a well-tanned face and a white-creased fore-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

head, which came from much wearing of a stocking-cap under a blazing sun, and imparted to its owner a look of cheerful surprise; and long yellow hair which fell and curled on a pair of broad shoulders.

And she—she had drawn him from death certain and close. She remembered the novel sensation of that startled jump which her heart gave when her naked arm went over his chest and his blue eyes looked into hers for a moment. It was very odd. It was very delightful.

"*B'en!*" said her father, as the long limbs straightened and then contracted into comfort, and the heavy eyes opened again and looked up at them with drowsy wonder. "He returns."

He continued to drop soup and cognac between the lips which were beginning to turn red again, and presently the man was sitting up with the spoon in his own hand, stowing away the soup as if he had not tasted food for thirty-six hours, which was about the actual state of the case.

"It is good to be alive again," he said at last, with a sigh of content. "And it is very good to eat when one has starved. That soup was surely made in heaven. Where am I, monsieur and ma'm'selle?"

"You are on Grand Bayou Light," said Pierre.

"I remember," he said, with a nod. "And the rest?"

ALAIN

Pierre shook his head. "All gone; and by rights you should be with them. You are the first to come alive out of the Creuset."

"All the same, I would sooner be here;" and the young man gazed intently at Barbe, and his face became all brown as the creases disappeared in puzzlement.

"Surely I have met ma'm'selle before somewhere," he said at last.

"But no," said Barbe vigorously, and a flood of hot colour ran all over her and made her feel overwarm.

"Nevertheless," he persisted, "it seems to me that I know ma'm'selle's face;" and his memory groped back to find the clue, but overshot the mark. "It might be some one like ma'm'selle," he said musingly; "but I do not think so, for never in my life have I seen any one else so—so like ma'm'selle," he added lamely, the while his bold blue eyes drank in all her ripe beauty, and enjoyed the draught so palpably that another energetic "No" broke unconsciously from Barbe's lips.

His name, he told them, was Alain Carbonec, and he had lived most of his life in Plougastel, just over the water from Brest. He had been two voyages to Newfoundland, and it was the second one that had landed him in the Pot.

And ever as he spoke his eyes rested in puzzled wonder on Barbe, but with never the slightest

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

thought that but for her he would by this time have been past all wonderment and would have solved all puzzles.

To Barbe he was a great and novel enjoyment, and a quickener of many new thoughts and feelings.

Not very often between alpha and omega can one point the finger of memory with absolute precision to an act or a moment and say, "There the change began. That was the actual turning-point in my life." Life and death we gauge to the nicest fraction; but life's other changes are mostly gradual. We recognise the flower and the fruit; but the hidden seed has long been working underground, and when precisely the white shoot first began to struggle towards the light we know not.

But in that strenuous moment when Barbe Carcassone's strong white arm encircled the unconscious Alain and drew him tight to her breast for the struggle out of the pool, a new sense, of which she had never known the lack, sprang up full-grown within her. She felt it, but did not understand it. How should she? For it was very much more than a half-drowned man on a spar that she drew to herself at that moment: it was life's best flower and fruit.

Do I say that she felt it? What she felt, as the man's eyes opened and looked wonderingly into hers, was that something fluttered in her throat like

ALAIN

a startled bird; that the glorious life in her veins leaped and rushed with new, amazing vigor; and that the water of the Race, which had been cold, became suddenly tempered to her blood. These were the outward signs visible to herself of that inward and spiritual grace which is the nearest thing earth has to heaven. It was a veritable baptism into a new and larger life—a baptism by full immersion.

Hitherto, by reason of the fewness of her needs and lack of knowledge, she had been content with what she had, and her nature had craved no more. Henceforth it would take more than sea and sky to fill her heart. She had looked into the eyes of a man, and found them good.

Fortunate it was for Barbe that the eyes were the eyes of a good man. Whenever she raised her eyes to his she found them fixed on her. She said to herself that it annoyed her. To get rid of them she went away up to the lantern. There were no eyes there to trouble her save the reflections of her own. She felt a novel lack and loneliness, and went downstairs again, and saw the bold blue eyes of the young sailor shine the brighter for her coming. *Eh bien!* if he liked to look at her, what harm? She would pay him back the same way. He was nice to look at, and he had seen many strange things, and his telling of them was full of interest.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

A day and a night's boiling in the Pot claimed a full week for recovery; and in that short week Barbe learned things that all her previous nineteen years had failed to teach her—things which the good Sisters of the Sacred Heart at St. Pol de Léon could never have taught her though she had lived with them for a hundred years.

Alain was doubtless much more deeply versed in woman's ways than she in man's, or thought himself so; and that amounts to much the same thing when the knowledge of the wisest is but a confession of ignorance, an academic trifling with the dainty covers of a sealed book, a superficial dallying with an unsolvable enigma. Still, no man lives for nineteen years without gleaning some stray stalks of vicarious knowledge, even though his personal experiences may have been of the most limited.

He had lived a clean, simple, amphibious life, half-fisher, half-farmer, as is the way in Strawberry Land. But he had mixed much with his fellows, and he had eyes and ears as good as any, and better than most. He had seen many girls in his time, and Plougastel is not without its beauties; but he had never seen a girl like this one. There was in her something of charm and grace which set her above every other girl he had ever met. What it was he could not tell.

"By much watching," he said to himself, "I shall

ALAIN

find out;" and with so pleasing a subject the study was much to his liking.

But the simple mighty source of Barbe's untutored grace was beyond him while he lay in his bunk and watched her. In a crude way, manlike, he looked to surprise art—rather, perhaps, artfulness—where there was in fact nothing but the free, unfettered grace of Nature—Nature innocent of corsets either of mind or body, and so void of any slightest touch of self-consciousness or restraint. Here were no gauds or beguilements, either of manner or dress, such as even the girls of Plougastel assumed on occasion, and the girls of Brest—"Eh bien, assez! One does not speak of such in the same breath with this one." In her homely garb and bare feet and uncoifed hair—which tangled all his soul in its dark meshes, and would have greatly scandalised the girls of Plenevec, whose hair is sacred and always hidden in many caps—she was the most wonderful girl he had ever seen.

In a crude way, however, he came, perhaps, to some slight understanding of the causes that had made her what she was, when he dragged his bruised limbs up the ladders to the lantern one day while she was busy polishing the reflectors.

"*Ma foi!* what a sight!" broke from him, as he sat with his feet dangling through the rails of the gallery and looked out on the blue sea, and the white-piled sky, and the savage cliffs with the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

league-long fringe of foam-lace at their feet, and the wavering cloud of sea-birds up above. "And have you lived here long, mademoiselle?"

"I have lived here all my life," said Barbe.

"But sometimes you go ashore?"

"Almost never," she said, with a shake of the head. "This has always been my home."

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said, with the wonder of a man who has spent his life among men, and with something of the pity of the mariner who hates above all things an anchorage on a lee-shore.

He looked thoughtfully at the girl, and then again at the wide sweep of the sea, the slow, majestic movement of the clouds, and the wild grandeur of the cliffs, and he knew that the girl fitted in with her surroundings. And perhaps just a glimmer of understanding was vouchsafed to him, for he murmured another half-unconscious "*Mon Dieu!*" and presently added an impatient "*Si, si,*" which might probably mean, "That explains it, you fool. Could she be anything but what she is in such a place?"

Then, with his eyes resting thoughtfully on Barbe, to the exclusion of all else, he went a step farther, and wondered dimly if she could have been anything but just what she was whatever her surroundings had been; for after all, he said to himself, the kernel makes the nut, not the shell.

CHAPTER III.

CADOUAL

IT was not to be expected that Pierre would view with complete equanimity the introduction into his family circle of a man so full of possibilities as this good-looking sailor-lad.

His eyes were open; but what could he do? For his own part he would as lief the man had stopped in the Pot with the rest, until in due time—when it had done with him—the scour of the Race had washed him out and laid him gently on the shore down at Plenevec; but Barbe's impetuosity had balked the Pot of its prey, and here he was.

And Barbe's interest in her treasure-trove was manifest. Again, what could he do? Having saved the man's life, he could not refuse him hospitality. Until the stranger was fairly fit he could not throw him out, or even hint at the desirability of his going. He could, however, sound him gently as to his intentions, and that he proceeded to do with the simple directness of the peasant.

"You will be going back to Plougastel, *mon gars*, when you are quite recovered?" he said.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Alain looked at him musingly, and Barbe looked at Alain.

"I am not sure," said the young man at last, as he dropped a crumb for Minette and Pippo to squabble over. "I have no one at Plougastel now. My people are all dead, and one place is as good as another. . . . Some, perhaps, are better."

"Newfoundland is a great country——"

"I would give the whole of it for ten hectares of Brittany and a well-found boat." And Barbe's eyes glowed responsive.

"Down the St. Lawrence, by Rivière du Loup and Quebec, it is very fine country. I was there once," said Pierre. "I wished my lot had been cast there."

"It is fine country," said the young man; "but it is not France."

"Fine men and beautiful women," said Pierre reminiscently.

"All the same——" and the blank expressed more, perhaps, than many words.

The time came, however, and all too quickly, when Alain could no longer evade the penalty of complete convalescence; and one bright morning found him and Pierre in the boat pulling steadily towards Plenevec. The emptiness within, as though a part of him had been overlooked and left behind in the Light, occasioned him much surprise and some bodily discomfort.

CADOUAL

Barbe, up in the gallery, waved a last farewell as the boat turned the corner into Grand Bayou Bay to avoid the force of the ebb-tide, and stood long watching the spot where it had disappeared. She also was feeling, not, strange to say, as though Alain had left anything behind, but rather as though he had left the hollow shaft still hollow and emptier than when he came to it. Who, then, was the gainer, since these two both felt a sense of loss? Not Pierre, I trow.

"Say then, Pierre," as the boat ground on the shingle at Plenevec, "what hast thou there?" and the speaker, a tall, loose-limbed, powerful young fellow clad in blue jersey and huge sea-boots, with a red stocking-cap on the back of his dark head, a cigarette in his mouth and his hands deep in his trouser-pockets, sauntered down to meet them.

"His ship went into the Pot a week ago, and all the rest were drowned," said Pierre.

"Yes, we've had them. And how did he escape?"

"God knows. He's the first I ever saw come out alive."

"He has the luck without doubt. Say then, *mon gars*, what is your next move? Where are you from?"

"Plougastel," said Alain.

"Ah, ha! They are fine lads at Plougastel, and good sailors. Can you throw and draw?"

"Surely! I had five years at the fishing."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"And are you going back to Plougastel?"

"I have nothing to go back for."

"Parents?"

To which Alain only shook his head.

"Have a cigarette. They are not what one gets hereabouts, and come up and have a drink. Pierre, *mon vieux*, you will join us in a *chopine*? Mère Buvel's cider is beginning to put on a flavour in its old age;" and they drew the boat a few feet up the wet stones, and ground their way up to the little hostelry.

A resplendent old gendarme in blue and white and silver, who seemed somehow out of place among the surrounding low colour-tones—the sober greys and sombre browns, and the dingy, ashen hue of salt-bitten, sun-dried wood—strolled up as they set foot on the solid earth above. The only thing that came anywhere near his magnificence was the sun; and Monsieur Gaudriol and the sun together made a dazzling combination which inspired in the younger members of the community a wholesome fear of the law.

"*Jour, Pierre!*" said the gendarme. "All well?"

"All well, M. Gaudriol, I thank you."

"And who is this?" and the keen eye of the law raked Alain from truck to keelson.

Pierre explained once more.

"We are going to drain a *chopine* to monsieur's past and future," said the first-comer. "Won't you

CADOUAL

join us, M. Gaudriol?" And they all went up together.

When they had clicked the dripping mugs across the well-scrubbed table, M. Gaudriol, with the authority of a paternal and would-be omniscient Government with a special solicitude for wandering sheep, proceeded to put Alain through his paces, and Alain took it all as a matter of course.

"Alain Carbonec—of Plougastel—age nineteen—sailor—parents dead—subject to one year's service—of age, therefore, in one year's time—been several voyages to Newfoundland—wrecked in brig *Cerise* on Grand Bayou—only one saved." That was the official report which, with a few subsequent additions, M. Gaudriol sent up to headquarters that night. His own private supplement to it ran something like this: "Good-looking lad, quiet and modest; but with plenty of spirit, and intelligent. Doubtful how he'll get on with Cadoual, who has a bit of the devil in him at times, and is difficult." However, to our *chopines!*

"Did you hear that old Jeannot was dead?" said Cadoual suddenly to Pierre.

"No. How was it?"

"The old fool took one drink too many four nights ago, and fell overboard drawing the net."

"Humph!" said Pierre.

"He always did drink too much, did Jeannot, and many's the time I've told him so; but as well

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

try to stop a sea-gull whistling as a dry man when he's got the thirst on him," said Sergeant Gaudriol.

"That leaves me alone in the boat, and that's no good," said Cadoual. "What do you say, *mon gars?*" to Alain. "Will you try the fishing here for a time before going on farther? I will give you Jeannot's screw, and that includes a fifth-share in the take. Is it a bargain?"

"It's a bargain," said Alain, and they struck hands on it, and Cadoual, with hang-the-expense recklessness, had the *chopines* filled again at a cost of twopence the lot, and offered them cigarettes all around, and they clicked and drank to the partnership.

"You can arrange with the old one"—*la vieille*, his mother—"to live with us if you like," said Cadoual. "She will do you well, and at a reasonable figure."

"No, monsieur, excuse me; but I think not that, by your leave," said Alain quietly. "No discourtesy to you or madame, you understand. But if we are rubbing shoulders all night in the boat, it would be wiser not to be rubbing them ashore all day, too, or they might get rough. Is it not so?"

"*Eh bien, mon beau!* that is as you choose; but the old one would do you well."

Sergeant Gaudriol nodded approvingly, and said, "It is good sense all the same."

CADOUAL

"And the little one, *mon vieux?*" asked the old gendarme of Pierre before they parted.

"She is well," said Pierre.

M. Gaudriol frequently asked after Barbe, whom he remembered as a tiny suck-a-thumb in a tight little white cotton skull-cap on her father's arm, that first morning when Pierre introduced himself to Plenevec. He had seen her once again, a child of six or so, with long dark hair and big blue eyes, and he had seen her but once or twice since. It was as the dark-haired little girl that he remembered her, though he knew her best as the skull-capped baby.

"A nice-looking lad," said M. Gaudriol to himself as he mused over the newcomer that night. "I wonder how he'll get on with George Cadoual? The poor old Jeannot had a deuce of a time and a dog's life. I'm not sure this one would take it sitting, as he did. However, *nous verrons.*"

A few days later he received a report from headquarters concerning Alain which caused him to regard the young fellow with quite new interest.

"*Tiens!*" he said to himself. "What an odd world it is! It would be odder still if—" And he nodded his head like a china mandarin. "It's not for me to interfere, anyhow. . . . If that was to come about I should take it that the *bon Dieu* had His finger in it."

CHAPTER IV.

GAIN OF LOSS

FOR the first time in her life Barbe found herself lonely after Alain left. That she had never felt so before was not by any means her fault, though very much her misfortune.

Who has no friends can suffer no bereavements; but such a depth of poverty is infinitely more to be deplored than the sorest wringing of the heart through loss, since bruising makes the heart grow tender. Philosophic wealth may consist in fewness of needs; but craving indicates growth even in an *Oliver Twist*. The rock-embedded toad lives a life of perfect peace and has no wants—so far as we know; but its existence is hardly the ideal one, and the moment its sphere is enlarged it stretches and begins to want. As a matter of fact, I believe it generally dies of over-excitement; but that is by the way, and in no degree affects my argument.

The Light, which had hitherto yielded Barbe all she wanted in the way of food for heart and mind, felt suddenly barren in these respects.

Twelve long years she had lived there in con-



GAIN OF LOSS

tentment, and never lacked good company, even when her father was absent. If complaint was ever in her, it was rather that, on occasion—say, on Christmas Eve—the Light was overcrowded.

And now this sailor-lad with the bold blue eyes and the long yellow hair had come for one short week, and the place felt empty without him.

Barbe went about her work sedately, and missed him in every corner.

That was where he used to sit smoking of an evening while he discoursed disjointedly of the world outside, and her father sat and grunted approvingly.

That was where he had sat with his legs dangling through the gallery rails while she polished the reflectors, and saw him in them all.

That was his empty bunk next to her own—for in Brittany the privacy of a box-bed may still imply a community of bedroom, and lighthouses are not, as a rule, built with guest-chambers. On one still night she had heard his quiet, regular breathing through the partition, and had lain awake listening to it, stirred with strange emotions, till she fell asleep only to dream of him still.

The straight blue eyes looked out at her from every corner just as they always had done. Always! did she say? And, *mon Dieu!* it was only one short week he had been there. The long yellow locks, whose ends curled upwards on his shoul-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

ders like loose vine-tendrils which seek the sun though they dangle to the ground, danced before her eyes up and down the ladders, and she saw them in the sunbeams that lighted up the dark corners of the rooms.

It takes a very fine face in a man to carry long hair. The minor poet who bushes his ambrosial locks behind his ears as a trade-mark to be read of men—whereby at times his person attracts more notice than his poems—is a sight for gods and rude little boys to laugh at. But to the bold-faced seamen of Finistère and Côtes-du-Nord the trailing locks impart no more effeminacy than they did to the Vikings of old, whose descendants many of them are.

That was the plate he had used that morning at breakfast. She knew it by the chip out of the side, like a thumb-mark, and had been annoyed that it should fall to him. She washed it carefully and used it herself thereafter in preference to plates unchipped.

When she had cleared out his bunk she put her own pillow and mattress into it, and flushed all over at so greatly daring.

Would he ever return? she wondered. Or was that week—that one short week—to be all?

It had been very strange, very sweet, while it lasted. She had never thought so much about any one before; but then that was because she had had

GAIN OF LOSS

no one to think about—except her father; and, somehow, her thoughts of Alain were quite different.

Ah, if it could have gone on so! If there had been no need for him to go! How bright the future would have seemed! Things were different with her somehow. The white-piled sky was very far away. The slow sweep of the waves had a sense of unfriendliness in them. Had they not wanted him for their prey? The restless foam fretting at the cliffs gave her no pleasure. The clouds of seabirds swinging round Cap Réhel annoyed her. They were nearer to him than she was.

Pippo's pointed attacks on Minette, and Minette's bristling charges on Pippo, afforded her no amusement. Even her water-gardens on the rock below were not as they used to be. The delicate weeds were there still, swinging their tremulous tresses to the kiss of wind and sun. The many-hued anemones were there. The scrambling crabs and tiny darting fishes were there. And there, too, from every still pool a pair of large violet eyes looked up at her with a wistfulness and want in them that had never been there before.

She had suffered loss. She was learning unconsciously the great lesson that in loss there may be gain; that she who loses is still richer than she who has naught to lose; that it is sweeter, with the infinite sweetness of the touch of sadness, to be able

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

to say "once was" than to have to confess that there never had been; that it is better to dwell among the hills and valleys of life, even though it be only for a season, even though it be only for one short week, than to live for ever on the level plain or in the placid seclusion of a lighthouse.

When her father returned in the afternoon, on the slack of the tide, all she said to him was, "He is gone?"

Perhaps he caught the touch of wistful sadness in her voice. He had, in his own way, and according to that which was in him, sounded the heights and the depths. He was prematurely aged with the bitterness of life. His fibres were tough with the strains they had had. It was too much, perhaps, to expect from him any very delicate sympathy with a girl's first sense of loss.

"*Si, si,*" he growled, "he is gone," and no more; and that from no conscious desire to mislead her. Simply that so far as they were concerned the uninvited guest had departed. He would have been better pleased if he had never arrived. For, *nom-de-Dieu!* one never knows. He was a good-looking lad, and doubtless as good as his looks; but he wanted no lads after his girl. Time enough for all that. It only meant trouble, or at the least upsetting; and what he wanted was peace. He had had trouble and upsetting enough, and more than most.

So Barbe took up her common tasks and went on



GAIN OF LOSS

her daily round, and life on the Light seemed to settle down into its old groove. But things could never be the same again to her, for she had looked into the eyes of a man, and the eyes of a man had followed her till she knew it by the leaping of her blood.

To Barbe the stranger was no uninvited guest, but a sweet treasure-trove snatched from the waves at risk of her own life. Her arm had been round him; she had pressed him to her breast; she had looked into his eyes, then and afterwards.

She had stretched out her hand and picked and tasted of the fruit of the tree of life.

She had dimly come to the knowledge that in the life of a maiden there are things of more account than clouds and waves and birds and fishes—and even than fathers.

CHAPTER V.

JOY OF LIFE

THREE days later, with the sweetness of her loss and the deeper gladness of all her memories upon her, Barbe was up in the lantern at early dawn, as was her wont.

It was a soft, mother-of-pearl morning, and the sea and the western sky still trailed their leaden garments of the night. Pippo was hopping stolidly round the gallery, and the urgent necessity of seeing everything that was going on, both above and around and below, and with only one eye to do it all, kept his little blue-grey head jerking to and fro in a way that got on Minette's nerves. Every other minute she made a dash at him, and he received her with a shrill scream, a wild flapping of wings, and a beak that rattled like a castanet. Then Minette would retire to prepare a fresh ambush and try to catch him on his blind side, but never succeeded in doing it. Now and again Barbe would look round at them, and say softly, "Gently, gently, my children;" to which neither of them paid the slightest attention.

JOY OF LIFE

A brown-sailed fishing-boat was making slowly for Plenevec, wobbling heavily along to the creak of the oars, for there was not a breath of wind. Barbe stood watching it for a moment, and at sight of her the oarsmen, standing face to the bows as they breasted the heavy oars, stopped in their rhythmic swing. A fluty hail came pealing across the smooth water, and a friendly hand waved in the boat—as it had waved once before when his ship was running down the Race to certain death, which yet for him was to be the entrance to a larger life. Then Barbe's young red blood leaped in her veins, and her face glowed from the inside as well as from the dawn as she waved her hand in reply.

So he had not gone after all, or he had come back. He was still within sight and sound. Her heart swelled within her till it gave her pain, and she struck her side with her fist to keep the unruly thing in order.

She watched the boat till it crept round the corner into Grand Bayou. She got another wave of the hand, and waved hers in reply. When the boat had quite disappeared she went back to her work. The sky was full of light, and the sea was dimpling and smiling under the tender kisses of the new-born sun. The sea-birds round Cap Réhel gleamed like a snow-cloud. The tall shaft of the lighthouse shone like a pillar of fire, and up on top of it Barbe Carcassone, nearer heaven than

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

most, said to herself that the good God was very good, and Alain was still there.

"*Tiens!*" said George Cadoual, as Alain straightened up and stopped rowing to wave his hand and send his greeting to Barbe up in the gallery. "You know La Carcassone! But, of course, you were there. I forgot. A pretty girl, they say; but the old one keeps her all to himself. A gloomy old curmudgeon; but he has reason, without doubt. He murdered a man and woman up there in the Light, you know."

"What are you saying, then?"

"But yes, it is true, my boy. It was before my time, but is well known. The man who used to keep the Light ran off with Pierre's wife, and he followed them and killed them both up there. For me, I say he did right, and they only gave him five years. And then he went to live there, and he's been there ever since. Ask old Gaudriol, *mon gars*"—as Alain's face betokened no sense of conviction; "he was here at the time. He has been here since the Flood, has Gaudriol."

But Alain was musing on this strange news, and he spoke no word till they landed.

That afternoon, after his sleep, Alain purposely chanced upon M. Gaudriol, and the old gendarme accepted a pipeful from him and sat down on the shingle to have a chat, for he had taken a liking to the lad at first sight.

JOY OF LIFE

"Is it true, M. Gaudriol, that M. Carcassone killed a man and woman out there?" Alain asked, with a seaward nod, as soon as their pipes were fairly alight.

"It is true enough, my boy," and the old man looked at him curiously from under his bushy white brows; "but he had great provocation. Being officer of the law myself, I would not go so far as to say he was justified; but they only gave him a short term, and nobody thought the worse of him when he came back. He did a thing, and he paid for it. *Voilà tout!* . . . Who was telling you?" he asked presently.

"Cadoual, this morning in the boat. As we passed the Light, ma'm'selle was up in the gallery, and I waved my hand to her."

Old Gaudriol nodded understandingly.

"She is a good girl, and pretty, they say."

"She is very beautiful," said Alain with conviction, "and I am quite sure she is good. Does she never come ashore?"

"I saw her that first morning when her father brought her here to me, after—you understand. And I saw her when he fetched her from St. Pol; and since then I think I have seen her but twice. Is she content out there all alone?"

"I suppose so," said Alain. "She did not say."

"All the same, it must be dull for her," said

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Gaudirol. "Young life has its rights also. The young should mix with the young."

The old man looked at the young one as though about to say something else, but he checked himself, and it was not till the pipes were beginning to whiffle that he asked casually, "And how do you get on with Cadoual?"

"Well enough," said Alain. "He's a bit odd at times, and he likes his own way, and thinks he knows more than most."

To all of which Gaudirol nodded assent, but said no more.

Alain had found bed and board in the house of an old widow woman whose son had been drowned the previous winter. *Veuve Pleuret* discovered in him a likeness to her lost boy, so that he found himself in very comfortable quarters, while the mother in her found relief in ministering to him. His business took him frequently up to the Cadoual house, and he never regretted that he was not living there.

He did not soon forget his first introduction to *Mère Cadoual*.

He had waited to see Pierre off home that first day; then, with M. Gaudirol's assistance, he went to find a lodging; and in the afternoon he walked up, as arranged with George, to have a talk with him about the fishing.

It was a good-sized house, with barns and an

JOY OF LIFE

untidy straw-yard surrounded by a high stone wall; with dung-heaps and rooting pigs and scratching poultry all about, and the fragrant smell of cattle, and the monotonous thumping of a churn.

He made for the sound of the churn, and a red-faced, tired-looking girl looked up and stopped work when his head appeared in the doorway.

"Pardon, ma'm'selle," he said; "can you tell me where I shall find M. Cadoual?"

But before she could answer a strident, high-pitched voice broke out behind him, and the churn started again with a jump.

"Now then, now then, young man," cried the voice, "what's all this? Don't you know better than to stop a churn? God knows that lazy hussy's only too glad to get the chance, and it's little enough she does unless I'm on her back all the time. But it's not backward she is at her meals, I warrant you; and drinks the cream, too, if you'll believe me."

The girl flushed a deeper red and began pounding away harder than ever to make up for lost time. She looked again at Alain because he was something new and good to look at, and then winked quickly at him, as much as to say, "You don't need to swallow all that, you know," as he turned to face the newcomer.

"Now, draggle-tail, don't punch the bottom out. Steady, girl, steady! Keep your temper, or you'll

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

get no butter; and no supper, *ma foi*, if you spoil the butter. One would think you'd never seen a man before in your life; whereas, if the truth were told——"

"Can I see M. Cadoual, madame?" asked Alain, to save the girl from the storm he had provoked.

"What is it you want, then? We've all the hands we need, if the lazy good-for-nothings would only work. You're all the same, you men; and, *dame!* the women are just as bad. Be off with you. *Allez, allez!*"

"M. Cadoual has engaged me for his boat——"

"You! *Mon Dieu!* The boy's a fool. It's a man he wants. Two boys in a boat won't catch any fish. Jeanne!" in a roar, "if that churn stops again I'll come in and slap your head for you."

She was a burly, dark-faced virago, with snapping black eyes and a black moustache, and another little moustache curled fiercely over each eye, which gave her a terribly wide-awake look: a woman whom Nature had palpably designed for a man, but, getting mixed, had left her man in the form of woman. Alain noticed that her hair was coarse like the tail of a horse, and she wore big wooden sabots with straw in them. She was so big and broad that she made him feel quite small, though he stood five feet ten in his bare feet. He was glad he had found lodgings elsewhere.

"You're over-young, *mon gars,*" she said. "Can

JOY OF LIFE

you sail a boat and cast the nets without tumbling overboard like our fool of a Jeannot?"

"I had five years of it, madame, and I have never got drowned."

"Evidently, since you are here still. All the same, I say you're too young. Geo-r-r-ge!"

"Hello! hello! What's the matter now? I'm not deaf. *Tiens!* it's you, *mon ami*. I thought the house was afire at the least;" and George Cadoual came out of the house with the sleep still blinking in his eyes.

"You're half asleep yet," said his mother, "and were all asleep a minute ago, I'll warrant. He's too young, George," and she eyed Alain as if he were a colt she hesitated to purchase on account of its youth. "What you need in that boat is a man——"

"Well," said George, "there'll be two men in it, and that's enough."

"Two light-headed boys, with not ballast enough between them to sink a net."

"Pfutt! He's from Plougastel. I know what I'm about."

"Ah! *ça*—from Plougastel! Well, that makes a difference;" and she regarded Alain with somewhat less disfavour.

Here a pair of tired horses came clanking into the yard, with rhythmic jingle of iron chains, and their driver slouching sideways on the hind one;

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and madame instantly assailed him with a fury of invective for having left off work, as she asserted, full ten minutes before the proper time.

"Come in and have a *chopine* and a cigarette," said Cadoual to Alain. "You'll find it better than old Mère Buvel's wash. The mother's enjoying herself now she's got something to scold;" and Alain followed him into the kitchen, while the girl at the churn took advantage of madame's diversion to rest her tired arms for a moment.

Their discussion on matters piscatorial was so discursive, and so frequently interrupted by madame's incursions into it, that the big kitchen table was being noisily laid for the evening meal before it was ended, and Cadoual insisted on Alain stopping to eat with them.

"I bet you it'll be better than anything you'll get down yonder," he said.

And as far as actual meat and drink went, he was right; but the contentious tongue of madame imparted a bitter flavour to it all for the others—all except George, whom Alain soon perceived to be at once master and spoiled boy of the house.

Six men and three maid-servants joined the board, including him of the horse and Jeanne of the churn. They all looked tired and sulky, and ate and drank in whipped silence, while madame, eating heartily the while, trounced them all in turn for endless faults of omission and commission.



JOY OF LIFE

There was no end to her tirade. She would recur again and again to some flagrant detail, like a dog to its clean-picked bone, till Alain wondered they could eat at all, and thanked his stars for lodging him elsewhere. They all seemed used to it, however, and ate stolidly under the snapping fire of madame's quick black eyes and voluble tongue, and were wise enough to add no fuel to the flames.

Once or twice George took exception to her remarks, and flung hot words back at her. At which she would wind up that particular fusillade with a curt "*Eh b'en!*" and a scorching glance at the original offender, and would instantly open a side battery in some other direction to cover her repulse.

Right glad was Alain when the meal was over and he was free to go. Old Jeannot, he learned, had lived in the Cadoual house. He was not much surprised at his abrupt departure from it, for to himself life would have been unbearable in such an atmosphere.

It was on the third day of his service in Cadoual's boat that they saw Barbe up in the gallery of the Light, as they laboured slowly homeward in the dawn past Grand Bayou.

So far he and Cadoual had got on all right together. The owner of the boat and four-fifths shareholder in the takings was inclined, indeed, to undue masterfulness and a somewhat overbearing demeanour towards the one-fifth shareholder, and

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

he exhibited a very much larger idea of his own capabilities than circumstances absolutely justified; but Alain had met that kind of man before, and knew how to handle him.

He went on quietly and unconcernedly with his own work in his own way, which Cadoual very quickly recognised to be the right way; and when George occasionally got overheated and inclined to bluster, Alain simply let him blow off steam till he cooled again, and showed plainly that it did not trouble him in the slightest.

George set it down to the stolidity to which he was accustomed; but he came in time to perceive that it was something different—something altogether stronger and deeper. He learned, in fact, by degrees that quietness does not necessarily imply weakness. He knew already by personal experience that bluster was not in all cases a sign of strength.

That distant glimpse of Barbe Carcassone, and much pleasant musing thereupon, woke in Alain the desire for closer communion with her. She was never far from his thoughts. That was not possible. The tall white shaft of the Light, gleaming golden in the setting sun as they stole out towards the fishing grounds or flashing silver in the dawn as they crept or raced home again, was an ever-present reminder of her where no reminder whatever was needed. The sweet elusive face glimmered among

JOY OF LIFE

the stars in the velvet vault above, and looked back at him from the coiling waters below. And away there under the cliffs the silent throb of the light sang "Barbe! Barbe! Barbe!" so loud and clear, to the tune that was in his heart that he looked at Cadoual sometimes and wondered at his indifference. But then he remembered that George did not know Barbe.

On the afternoon of the day after they had seen her up in the lantern, Alain came down the shingle with springs in his feet so that the stones flew before him. He ran the dingy which usually trailed behind the lugger into the water, and sent her leaping over the waves like a football.

"Hello, Alain! Where away now? You're in a hurry," hailed M. Gaudriol.

For answer Alain, with a smile, jerked his head over his shoulder towards Grand Bayou rocks, and lifted the dingy nearly out of the water in his haste to be there.

"It is well," said M. Gaudriol to himself, and sat down with his back against the lugger to watch him. "*Mais oui*," he said, with a satisfied nod, "*ça marche!*" and it was not the blunt-nosed little boat to which he referred.

Barbe's observant eye caught sight of the round dot as soon as it turned the corner out of Grand Bayou Bay. Her work was done, and she was sitting in the gallery with her family squabbling

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

round her, as she knitted pleasant thoughts of Alain into a long blue winter stocking for—well, perhaps for her father, perhaps for some one else.

When the round black dot with the rhythmic flashes at its sides headed straight for the rocks she knew who it was, and her face flushed rosy red, and a smile of satisfied hope played hide-and-seek with a touch of momentary confusion in it. When one has been greatly longing for a person, and that person suddenly appears, as though in answer to a summons which the lips would never have ventured to utter, one may be grateful that the unexpected arrival is a good mile away in a blunt-nosed dingy, and that time is afforded for the recovery of one's equanimity without betrayal of secrets.

The boat came steadily on, and Barbe sat watching it with a glad face. A quarter of a mile away Alain stopped for the first time, and turned and looked eagerly at the Light. He saw her in the gallery and waved his hand, and received a wave of the blue stocking in return. Then he bent to his oars again, and the blunt-nosed boat went bounding over the waves.

He was not quite sure how Pierre would receive him; but, *nom-de-Dieu!* Pierre was not the Almighty, even if he was Barbe's father—which in fact was a thing somewhat difficult to understand in itself; and if Barbe gave him welcome he could put up with the lack of it from Pierre.

JOY OF LIFE

Barbe ran down the ladders, and was standing in the dark doorway when the dingy's black snout nuzzled softly up to the iron rungs below. One glance showed Alain that the lighthouse boat was not hanging from the beams. So Pierre was ashore, and that was so much the better. He caught a glimpse of the sweet, flushed face craning over to watch him. The tide was rising, so all he had to do was to tie the boat to a lofty rung of the ladder, and it swung out with no fear of abrasions.

Then he came up the rungs like a squirrel; but when he reached the doorway it was empty. For Barbe, overwhelmed by a sudden accession of maiden modesty, had fled up the ladders with twinkling white feet at the first upward bob of the yellow curls. She never stopped till she was sitting in the gallery again, knitting furiously at the blue stocking and looking calmly at Cap Réhel, with a very red face and a heart that thumped so loud against her blue bodice that she was sure Alain would see it even if he did not hear it.

He ran on and up until he found her.

"*Mon Dieu*, ma'm'selle, but it is good to see you again!" he said, with the joy of it blazing in his eyes.

"How, then?" said Barbe, as quietly as that troublesome jumping thing inside her bodice would let her.

"*Mais, mon Dieu!* I do not know. But, all

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

the same, the sight of you fills me like food and wine."

"It is cheap faring," said Barbe, with a smile which was lost in a furious rush of colour at his immediate,—

"Ah, it would be if one had you always to look at."

But the wave of colour made him doubt he had said too much, and to cover it he added, "Do you know, ma'm'selle, I thought I saw you in the doorway downstairs? I could have sworn I saw you. It must have been, I suppose——"

"Yes?" asked Barbe as he came to a stop.

"*Eh bien!* I wanted so much to see you that I suppose I thought I did."

"But no," confessed Barbe's essential truthfulness; "I was there. I went down"—and then the natural perversity of woman asserted itself—"to tell you where to moor your boat."

"It was good of you," said Alain gratefully. "And your father—he is not here?"

"No," she said, with a smile; "he is gone to Plenevec."

"I did not see him," said Alain; "but in truth I did not look. I came straight out of the house to the boat."

"We thought you had gone away."

"No. M. Cadoual offered me a share in his boat, so I stopped. *Mais, tiens, ma'm'selle!*" he

JOY OF LIFE

broke out reminiscently, as he remembered suddenly that her father was present when the bargain was struck, and then stopped short as he recognised that the old man had either not informed or had misinformed her as to the facts of the case.

"You were saying—" said Barbe.

"Cadoual had lost his man Jeannot, and he offered me his place; and I had nothing to take me away, so I stopped."

"It was good of him! Is he good? I do not know him."

"We get on all right in the boat. But I am glad I do not live with him;" and he described the Cadoual household with such gusto as to provoke Barbe's laughter.

"They are rich there, I suppose," he concluded, "what with the farm and the boat; and madame is a slave-driver. But, ma'm'selle, I would live on a bare rock sooner than be within sound of Mère Cadoual's tongue. I wonder any of them put up with it. It is not reasonable."

"I should not like that. It is so very much better to be quiet; and it is so very quiet here."

"It is like heaven here," said Alain fervently, "and the other is like the other place."

"There comes my father," said Barbe, with a little start at the sudden knowledge that she would have been quite as well pleased if it had not been so.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"In fact, yes, it is he. Will he object to my being here?"

"Why should he?"

"One never knows. All the same, I am glad I came. I shall come again," and he looked tentatively at her.

But she was looking calmly out at the boat creeping slowly over the smooth water towards them. She made no answer, and her silence satisfied him.

They were both in the doorway below, ready to hoist up the boat by the time Pierre reached the iron ladder.

"Ah, *mon gars*, it is you, then," he said as he climbed slowly up to them, with his purchases slung at his back.

"But yes, M. Carcassone, it is I. I did not see you in the village when I came away."

"*Eh, bien!* it wouldn't have made much difference if you had, I suppose," said the old man.

"That is true," said Alain. "All the same, I might have saved your arms the pull."

"They are still able for it," said Pierre, stretching them out strongly. "And how do you get along with Cadoual?" he asked as they climbed the ladders to the living-room.

Then Barbe perceived that her father had known all along that Alain had not gone away as he had let her suppose. She remembered, too, that Alain had not told her that her father knew.

JOY OF LIFE

"Well enough," said Alain. "We have had good catches so far, and we haven't got to fighting."

"Humph-hm!" grunted Pierre. "Well, that's something with Cadoual."

The old man extended no invitation to him to return when he bade them adieu; but with Barbe's golden silence in his mind that did not trouble him. A heart that felt many sizes too large for its place, and a pair of strong arms that rejoiced anew in their strength, sent the blunt-nosed dingy along at a pace the like of which it had never known before.

Barbe sat in the gallery watching him, and he never took his eyes off her. Three times he waved his hand to her, and received a wave of the blue stocking in reply; then he turned the corner into Grand Bayou Bay.

And when Barbe turned to the west, before going inside, the sun was just sinking into the sea amid a soft translucent glory of crimson and amber such as she never remembered seeing before in all her life; and she stood and looked at it, and thought of Alain Carbonec.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE'S CROWN

A WEEK later, when Alain's desire for sight and speech of Barbe had come to a head again, he was running the dingy down the shingle, when Cadoual hailed him from the dry land above.

"Hello, Alain! Going out?"

"Yes."

"Where then?"

"To the Light."

"I'll help you pull. I'm in the humour for a row. *Allons!*"

The boat was his. To decline his company was hardly possible; to refuse to go would only cause ill-feeling. Against his will, Alain found himself pulling out with George behind him; and George's eyes were twinkling mischievously at the yellow curls in front of him, with thought of his own exceeding cleverness.

That visit, however, was not much of a success, from Alain's point of view at all events; for Barbe was constrained to so shy a silence by this over-

LIFE'S CROWN

whelming influx of strangers that she hardly opened her mouth. Pierre received them with sombre impassivity, and smoked gloomily with them, and drank the coffee which Barbe prepared. George's dark eyes followed her every movement with an amazed satisfaction which awoke in her only a feeling of annoyance and something akin to discomfort. Alain, too, sat mum; for Barbe's eyes had opened wide with surprise at sight of his companion, and he had no opportunity of explaining his presence.

"Heavens! What a girl! what a girl!" chanted George all the way home, to the chirp and squeak of the crazy rowlocks. "And to think that she has been there all these years and I have never seen her! *Mais, mon Dieu!* it is incredible!"

Alain bore it all in silence and showed no sign, though he came in time, and through the bottling-up of his feelings, within measurable distance of driving his heel through the bottom of the boat to put an end to it all.

George spoke much of Barbe during the following days. Her beauty had bitten deep into his heart. He had nothing but good to say of her, however, and Alain had no just cause for resentment beyond the fact that it was Barbe whose praises George sang without ceasing, and that somehow he felt as though Barbe belonged to him and that George was a trespasser.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

After that Alain required the boat no more, and showed no visible desire to visit the Light.

"Say, then, *mon gars*," said George at last one afternoon, "when do we go out yonder again?"

"I have not been invited," said Alain.

"Nor I; but, *nom-de-Dieu!* if one waits to be invited one may wait long. Shall we go this evening?"

But Alain shook his head and said decisively, "No, I am not going."

On that George took the boat himself and pulled out to the Light. He made no progress with Barbe, however. Her beauty intoxicated him; but she scarcely opened her lips, and found occupation in the lantern, while he sat smoking with her father down below. She had seen his boat turn out of the bay, and had watched it eagerly in the hope that it was Alain. When it turned out to be George she was vexed and disappointed; but she showed it only by increased reserve and the elimination of herself from the company.

George was a very sulky man in the boat that night, to Alain's great satisfaction. He had seen him pull out all by himself, and knew that the six-mile row, with a double crossing of the Race, would try those none-too-fit muscles of his smartly. His snappy humour when he got back gave Alain much enjoyment, since it proved the coolness of his reception. If George had been happy, or even

LIFE'S CROWN

equable, he would have hated him. As it was, he felt extremely tolerant towards him, and absolutely declined to be provoked on any count whatever.

The day after George's visit Barbe sat in the gallery, with her knitting and her thoughts and her unruly children. Her lips worked now and again, and a tiny wrinkle crept over her smooth brown brow as she wondered why Alain had ever brought this other man, whom she did not like, and why George had come back and Alain had not.

Perhaps they had quarrelled. Cadoual looked as though that would not be a difficult matter with him. She hoped they had not, however, as that might send Alain away, and then things would not be the same at all—*mon Dieu, non!*—and the little brown brow wrinkled and the sweet lips twisted slightly at the thought.

When she raised her eyes from her work one time for a calm glance over the widespread scene, they lighted by chance on something unusual. She knew it all so intimately, in all its possible moods, that no smallest thing out of the common could escape her.

There was something in the slack of the Race on the seaward side—something that gleamed white in the sun, then turned to yellow, and then white again. The tide was on the ebb; but the Race ran swiftly at all times. Now it was running out of the Pot towards the sea.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

She watched earnestly, then stood eagerly grasping the railing, with her eyes fixed intently on that moving speck. Then a white hand rose for a second from the water, like the flashing of a sea-gull's breast, and waved her a hasty greeting.

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" she murmured, and her heart gave a jump and sent the colour flying to her face. "It is he!"

She waved her hand in reply, and stood watching him breathlessly, for the Race was strong and full of treachery. But Alain was stronger, since he had got it at its weakest. He came ploughing along, with sweeping side strokes which drove his yellow head triumphantly through the writhing coils, and now and again the wet face turned up for a forward look at the haven ahead.

She watched him till he breasted through under lee of the uncovered rocks, and then she went in and down the ladders to meet him. By the time she reached the doorway he was climbing the iron rungs, dressed in a thin blue cotton blouse and trousers, both wringing wet through having been worn in a tightly twisted rope round his waist. This time she did not run from him.

Never had she seen a brighter, handsomer face than the one that rose up at her feet as he grasped the hand-irons and stood in the doorway before her, with the life of the fight still aflame in it, and the

LIFE'S CROWN

long yellow hair streaming over his shoulders; but then she had not seen very many faces.

And never had Alain seen a face that filled his heart like this one, eager welcome and half-veiled gentle chiding struggling in it for mastery.

"Oh, you should not have done it!" she said. "You might have been drowned." But no words could gainsay the light of welcome in her eyes.

"Not at all," he said lightly. "I am at home in the water. We are good friends. It is better than the boat when Cadoual's in it."

She turned and led the way to the ladder, then stood aside for him to mount first.

"You are very wet," she said as they came out into the gallery.

"I will sit in the sun and dry," he laughed. "I am warm enough inside, I assure you, ma'm'selle." And he sat himself down in his old way, with his back against the side of the lantern and his feet through the open railing; and Pippo came and pecked him inquisitively on one side, while Minette minced about him on the other, but declined his invitations to closer greeting on account of his dampness.

"Why did you bring that man the other day?" asked Barbe presently.

"I did not bring him. He would come, and I could not stop him without making a quarrel."

"He came again yesterday."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"I know. I saw him. He was very sulky all night. I do not think he enjoyed himself."

"I do not like him," she said quietly. "When he looks at me I feel uncomfortable."

The thought of her discomfort at George's regards was distinctly agreeable to him, although he did not like the thought of her being made uncomfortable.

"My father is away to the village," she said.

"I know. I saw him go, and—and—I wanted to see you again, so I came."

"How did you come?" she asked.

"Down the cliff, and then crawled along the rocks as far as I could."

"Down Cap Réhel? Surely never!" and she eyed him anxiously.

"But yes, truly. It looks impossible from here; but it's easy enough when you're at it. It is full of holes for fingers and toes. I shall go back the same way."

"It is dangerous," she said, still solicitous on his account.

"Only in the looks, I assure you. It is good of you to care, ma'm'selle—Barbe."

"But of course I care," she said. "What was the good of dragging you out of the Pot if you are going to break yourself to pieces on the rocks?"

"But I won't, I promise you. It is quite easy, and one soon gets used to the birds. They get very

LIFE'S CROWN

angry, and they are very stupid, and there are so many of them—clouds and clouds. You don't get any idea of them from here."

Barbe shook her head once more and said quietly, "I should be sorry if you fell."

"I won't fall. I shall go back on the first of the flood."

She nodded and said, "This side of the Pot?"

"Of course."

"It boils and it boils," said Barbe, looking down askance at the troubled waters. "They say the devil lives there."

At which local monopolisation of the Evil One Alain laughed.

"All the same," continued Barbe, "if you got in there you would never come out again. You are the only one who ever came out alive."

"I'll take very good care I never get in again. But I'm glad I got in that time," said he.

Conversationally it was not, perhaps, very explicit as love-making; but love's fullest expression is not in words, and these were peasants, bound by the shackles of their inheritance.

The thrill of meeting eyes, the sunny waves of colour that swept across their faces, the softened inflections of their voices, the tumult that shook him when her soft blue skirts swished against him, and the thrill that electrified them both when once their bare feet chanced lightly to touch; these told the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

sweet old story plainer than all the words in the world, and spoke of feelings as deep as kings and queens may know.

"The tide is on the turn, Barbe," said Alain at last as he looked down on the Race. "It is time for me to go."

"You will have care, Alain?"

"I will take every care, *ma chère*. I may come again?"

"If you will take no harm," she said hesitatingly. "But I shall have fear for you."

"Then I shall come again to show you it is needless."

Their pulses beat furiously as he took her hand, and, with intuition descended from heaven knows where—or perhaps, after all, it was simple inspiration—bent and kissed it with the loving courtesy natural to his race but foreign to the actual soil.

Barbe's eyes glowed mistily and she swayed slightly as she climbed back up the ladders in the twilight of the shaft. When she came out into the gallery she could hardly see his white body ploughing through the hesitating bubble of the Race for her streaming eyes. She dropped her head onto her hands on the railing and cried softly, "*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu*, have care of him! Holy Mary, watch over him!"

For all the past was past, and heaven and earth were new created for her in this glowing hour. A



LIFE'S CROWN

glory had come into her life which passed her knowledge. Her heart, swept bare with sweet, delicious fires, was clothed anew in tints of sunset and of dawn. Heaven itself could hold no more for her than the perfect consummation of that which was in her now. After nineteen years of nature, and a very deep love for it, she had awakened at last to the knowledge that the love of one man is worth all the world, and more. She knew that Alain Carbonec was all heaven and earth to her, and she knew that Alain loved her.

When her father came home she did not tell him that Alain had been there.

CHAPTER VII

LOVE'S WATERWAY

IN the boat the two men got along without any visible quarrel; but there was a coolness between them which did not make for comfort.

Alain, in the knowledge that the prize was his, bore Cadoual's humours with the utmost equanimity. Cadoual, knowing only that his own frequent visits to the Light had not advanced him one step in Barbe's regards, grew more sulky and gloomy after each one.

So far as he knew, the course was clear for him. Alain was evidently not inclined to follow the matter up on his own account. That first visit had, doubtless, been dictated by feelings of gratitude towards Pierre and Barbe for their care of him in his time of need, though it did seem almost impossible that any man with blood in his veins could have lived near Barbe Carcassone for a week and not been fired by her as he himself was. For she was different from the Plenevec girls, and indeed from any girl he had ever come in contact with, as—well, as one of the trim English yachts which sometimes put into Morlaix was from a Plenevec lugger.

LOVE'S WATERWAY

Alain, of course, might have other ties in his own country. He never spoke of Barbe, and maintained an obstinate silence when any one else did so. In fact, Cadoual came to believe that Alain was naturally of a silent and stolid disposition, so little did he speak at all. But he showed himself a first-rate sailor and a lucky fisherman. So George was satisfied with his bargain, and congratulated himself, and to that extent with reason. He had not so far heard of Alain's Leandrine visits to the Light. He himself went across at least once a week, and sat smoking gloomily with Pierre, and devouring Barbe with eyes of smouldering fire whenever she put in an appearance, but made no headway with her.

And once in each week Alain set the white clouds of Cap Réhel whirling and shrieking with anger as he clambered down the stark face of the cliff, and boldly breasted the slack of the Race, after his heart's desire. From her coign of vantage, with anxious eyes and compressed lips and white-fingered grip of the gallery rail, as though thereby to lift him clear of all dangers, Barbe watched him from the moment he appeared on the cliff till he drew in towards the uncovered rocks below her; and if she said no word, her heart was big with prayers for his safety. Then, as his white arm shot up over the ledge and he hung panting, she ran down the ladders and met him in the doorway.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

There was no disguisement of their feelings; such things come not of nature.

"Thou hast risked it again?" was her greeting on his second coming, and all unconsciously she dropped into that tenderer form of speech in which she conversed with him in her thoughts.

"It is a small price to pay for sight of thee, dearest;" and holding both her warm hands in his soddened ones—while her hot pulses beat through into his and filled him with new fire—he drew her to him and kissed her on the lips.

"I am always fearful for thee, Alain," murmured the quivering red lips. And he kissed them again to take away her fears.

"If thou hast never more to fear for me than that, little one, it shall be well with us."

"Thou hast made me as wet as thyself," she said, with a joyous laugh.

"I would I could dry thee with kisses;" and they went up the ladders to dry themselves in the more effectual kisses of the sun.

Of deliberate intent he chose to come when her father was away. Not that he had any grounds to fear denial or objection from the old man; simply that his whole nature craved Barbe—Barbe herself for herself. When Pierre was there Barbe was simply Pierre's daughter, and of necessity his presence was a check to the freedom of their intercourse.



LOVE'S WATERWAY

So with every meeting their hearts were knit closer and closer, till to sunder them would have meant a rending and tearing of the very fibres of their being, and that last desperate agony which the world calls heart-break.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHERE THOU GOEST"

AS time passed, and George Cadoual found that all his attempts in that direction did not advance him one step in Barbe's good graces, his ill-humour developed to such an extent as to make him somewhat difficult to live with, whether on land or sea.

At home they bore with him as best they could, since they had to. His mother, virago as she was to all the rest of the world, had always consistently given in to him. The spoiled boy had developed into the hectoring man, who suffered no will but his own, and made life unbearable to those who opposed it. He interfered but little, as a rule, with the management of the farm, since his mother had taken that upon her much more capable shoulders. The brunt of his evil temper fell, therefore, upon herself, and she reaped as she had sown.

Now, at odds with himself and the world in general because Barbe Carcassone declined to look—much less to smile—upon him, he vented his humour on all and sundry, and the Cadoual house was full of fault-findings and recriminations, and became a most unpleasant place to dwell in.

“WHERE THOU GOEST”

When his mother endeavoured to find out what the trouble was he curtly told her to mind her own affairs. Instead, she went down to the village to learn if she could what girl was at the bottom of it all. There she heard of George's frequent visits to the Light, and had no difficulty in putting two and two together. She had only once seen Barbe, and that many years ago. It was not surprising, therefore, that she came short of a clear understanding of her son's feelings.

One night when he was behaving even more unpleasantly than usual, she unwisely slacked her own loose grip of the family temper and twitted him with his trouble.

“So it is that bare-headed girl of Grand Bayou that is twisting you all awry,” she said bitterly.

“What do you mean?” asked George blackly.

“It is the talk of the village,” replied madame scornfully. “Every week you go there, and each time you come back like a whipped dog.”

“Thousand thunders! Let me meet the man who says so.”

“It's the women,” laughed madame. “Trust the women to know when a man's making a fool of himself.”

“—— the women!” said George.

“Don't throw yourself away on a girl like that, my boy. She comes of bad stock. Her mother ran away, and her father murdered her for it.”

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"I know all that without your telling me."

"There's Marie Chanoine up at La Vallaye will take you like a shot, and she with a dowry of fifty thousand francs at the least."

"And a crooked eye and one leg shorter than the other! *Merci!*" said George. "You have never seen La Carcassone or you wouldn't speak of Marie Chanoine."

"I've seen her once, and that was quite enough. I never want to set eyes on her again."

"You'll see enough of her if I can bring it about."

"You would marry her?"

"I intend to."

"*A la bonheur!* But it takes two to make a bargain, and she wants none of it, they say."

"They do, do they? *Eh bien*, we'll see! If I hear them say it I'll stuff their teeth down their throats, and you can tell them so;" and he slouched down to Mère Buvel's to hear if any one was saying anything of that particular kind at the moment.

As luck would have it he had been the subject of conversation.

"*Tiens*, George! Is it true that Alain Carbonec swims out from Réhel point to Grand Bayou Light every week to see Pierre's girl?" asked one.

"I didn't say every week," interrupted another. "I said I'd seen him do it once."

"And when was that?" asked George; and they

"WHERE THOU GOEST"

saw that his face was the colour of lead, so difficult did he find it to hold himself in.

"This afternoon."

"You're a fool, V^é Vallek," said George, "or else you were drunker than usual. Alain has been up at the farm with me all afternoon. Perhaps it was yourself swam out to show ma'm'selle the ugliest face in Plenevec."

"Perhaps that was it," grinned Vallek, "and perhaps it wasn't. From all accounts ma'm'selle doesn't find yours to her liking, anyhow."

The other men dragged them apart before much bodily harm was done, and George drank cognac *fine* to the others' sloppy cider, chewed his cigarettes to pulp because he couldn't find his mouthpiece—he never could smoke like other men—and carried home with him a blacker mood than he brought.

He said nothing to Alain, but eyed him viciously out of the corners of his eyes, and thereafter set himself to a cautious observation of his comings and goings.

And so it came that one afternoon he lay in the gorse on the nearer slope of Cap Réhel and watched Alain plough his way through the Race, saw the gleam of his white body as he climbed up on to the rocks, saw the blue-clad figure mount the iron rungs and meet the waiting figure in the dark doorway. He lay there, watching and cursing, with his heart

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

like a venomous toad in his tortured body—for he writhed and twisted in agonies of hate and slighted love—till the swimmer came lunging back through the slack of the tide, and then he crept away. If Alain could have seen the vindictive looks shot at him in the dark that night he might have deemed it advisable to avoid turning his back on his partner; but George said no word, and Alain noticed nothing more in him than the sullen moodiness to which he had become accustomed of late, and the cause of which he very well knew.

Pierre did not go to Plenevec when the usual time came round the following week, and as a consequence Alain did not go to Grand Bayou.

Barbe missed him.

She felt certain, too, that her father had learned of his visits, and that trouble would come of it, though the old man never opened his lips on the subject.

For three days Alain, lying in the fringe on Cap Réhel, waited for the boat to disappear from its hanging beams. But day after day it hung there, a silent barrier between Barbe and himself, till his hungry heart was down at starvation-point, and he determined to face the double event—the angry waters of the Race and possibly an angrier father at the end of them.

Carcassone met him with well-assumed surprise as he climbed into the doorway.

“WHERE THOU GOEST”

“*Mon Dieu, mon gars!* What is this? Are you shipwrecked again?”

“Not at all. This is how I prefer to visit you, M. Carcassone, since I have no boat of my own and I do not care for company.”

“It is very kind of you—” began Pierre.

“*Tenez!*” Let us understand one another, M. Carcassone. It is Barbe I come to see. I have been before, and I came purposely when you were absent because—well, because it was Barbe I came to see, you understand?”

“I understand,” said Pierre. “But it is to stop. If you come again I shall send Barbe back to the Sisters at St. Pol. She is too young and understands too little of such things to know what is good for her.”

“I will come when you are here in future if you insist on it.”

“No, *mon gars*, you will not come at all,” said Pierre.

“And why?”

“Because I say so, and I am master here.”

“What have you against me, M. Carcassone?”

“Nothing whatever, *mon gars*, nor anything for you. Barbe is too young to know her own mind yet. You also, without doubt.”

“But no. I know my own mind, and I know Barbe’s——”

“*B’en!* Now you know mine also.”

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"And it is as well you should know ours. We love one another dearly."

"Tchutt! You are both too young to know what it means."

"Nevertheless we know, and nothing you can do will turn us from it."

"We shall see," said Pierre.

"May I see Barbe?"

"No."

"But yes!" said a voice at the top of the ladder leading up to the next room. "I am here, Alain," and a pair of sun-browned feet, which shone white in the gleam of the doorway, came twinkling down the rungs, and Barbe stood beside them.

"And why should I not see Alain?" she asked angrily of her father.

"*Eh bien*, thou seest him. What more?" growled Pierre.

"See then, *mon père*, I love Alain with all my heart, as he loves me. You cannot divide us, try how you will. It is best for us all that you should not try."

"Go upstairs!" said her father angrily.

"No, I won't go upstairs unless Alain comes too. I have heard all you said. You may send me to St. Pol or anywhere else; it will be no use. Alain has my heart and I will not give him up."

"We shall see," said Pierre. "It is an ill return

"WHERE THOU GOEST"

you make me for saving your life, *mon gars*," to Alain.

"You did not," broke in Barbe. "It was I. It was I who swam into the Pot and brought him out. He belongs all to me;" and she stood facing her father all aflame with love and anger.

"May the good God reward thee, Barbe. I did not know it," said Alain. "I am doubly thine, and nothing shall part us."

"We shall see," said Pierre once more. "I bid you go, *mon gars*, and it will be better that you return no more."

"I will go," said Alain, "when I have spoken with Barbe. But I will not promise not to return. Gently, my friend!" as Pierre came towards him with black face and clenched fists; "I am strong. I should be sorry to lay finger on Barbe's father; but——"

Pierre thought better of it. "*B'en!*" he said sullenly. "You may speak with her. But if you return I will not answer for you."

"*Allons*, Barbe!" said Alain, and mounted the ladder, and she followed him.

"Oh, Alain, it is the beginning of troubles!" sobbed Barbe as they came out on to the gallery.

"Two stout hearts will beat them, Barbe. And it was thou who swam into the Pot and brought me out that day! *Mon Dieu*, there was courage if you like!"

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"I did not know it was thee, Alain. I swam for a drowning man, and I found thee."

"And thy man will I be for ever and ever, Barbe. Whatever comes or goes, nothing shall part us;" and he kissed her again and again, mouth and eyes and flaming cheeks, till she put up a little brown hand to restrain him. "Will he send thee away?" he asked.

"I do not know. He needs me here."

"If he does I shall follow and find thee. There is nothing but thee to keep me here, and one place is as good as another. But the only place for me is where thou art, Barbe, and there will I be."

They found it very hard to part that day, for in spite of their brave words their hearts were not without fears for what the future might hold for them.

It was, indeed, almost as though a corner of the veil had been lifted and a glimpse of the coming shadows vouchsafed to them.

CHAPTER IX

AN UPHEAVAL

GEORGE CADOUAL'S next visit to the Light brought him only vexation of spirit and consequent increase of malevolence. Pierre received him with gloomy impassivity. Barbe flatly refused to come down out of the lantern. When, in desperation, he plucked up spirit to follow her there she immediately descended, and would not throw him so much as a single look, much less a word.

Pierre had no wish to embroil himself with the wealthiest man in Plenevec—a man, too, who had ample opportunities of damaging one behind one's back, and who would have no hesitation in doing so to further his own ends or pay off his own scores. So he held aloof; and if he derived any enjoyment from the quiet game of hide-and-seek he did not show it.

He had no desire for Barbe to marry any one. It would bring changes into the level life which for twelve years had amply satisfied him. Still, when she did marry, as he supposed she one day would, he would prefer the man with the money to the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

man without it. So, knowing that George's suit was, for the present at all events, useless, he gave him a free hand; and when George sulkily gave up the chase and dropped into a chair near him, all he said was, "It's no use at present, *mon gars*. She is crazy for Alain Carbonec."

"Curse him!" snapped George, and puffed more curses through his smoke.

That night in the boat he found it difficult to keep his hands off Alain. A crack over the head while the other bent over to the nets, and it would be done. But—behind that rose two upright posts and a slant-edged knife, and, much as he hated Alain, he had no desire to take his last look through the narrow window on his account. A second disappearance from the Cadoual boat would never pass unnoticed; and Alain Carbonec was not like old Jeannot. He was no fool, he did not drink, and he was not the kind of man who tumbled overboard of his own accord. So George gnawed his heart in a silence that was denser and blacker than the night, and thought much; and when a man like George Cadoual thinks much under such conditions, it behooves the man about whom he is thinking to be on his guard.

If only Cadoual's ill-humour could have contented itself with silence and evil thoughts the night might have passed without untoward happening; but the very quietness of Alain's bearing was gall

AN UPHEAVAL

and wormwood to him. All the envy, hatred and malice of his evil nature boiled and seethed within him like the contents of a witch's caldron.

He kept his tongue within his teeth as long as he could, and then said:

"So you no longer visit the Light, *mon beau?*"

"How then?" asked Alain.

"The moth no longer goes to its candle?"

"How's that?" asked Alain imperturbably.

"Or if it goes it goes secretly, so that it can have its candle all to itself."

"Who goes by himself chooses his own company," said Alain curtly.

"It is true, and inflicts it on ma'm'selle also."

"That's as it may be. Ma'm'selle is her own mistress."

"As to that," said Cadoual, with a nasty shrug, the flavour of which went into his voice, "you probably know more about it than any one else. I confess I have my doubts——"

Then a swinging blow on the side of the head sent him floundering among the fish in the bottom of the boat; and as he scrambled up with his mouth full of fish scales and curses, another stinging blow in the face sent him back again. He sat for a moment, then picked up a heavy stone out of the ballast and hurled it at Alain's head.

It was a clear night, with an amazing wealth of stars but no moon. The waves, when they broke

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

against the side of the boat, or by reason of carrying their heads too high, were shot with phosphorescent gleams. Not a light to fight by if any choice were left to one: a light, nevertheless, by which stones might be hurled with fair prospect of hitting when the object aimed at was only six feet away, and the stones came whizzing at Alain as fast as Cadoual could stoop and fling them. One caught him at last on the shoulder. As he reeled, the boat wobbled to the smack of a wave and he measured his length among the cargo.

Without rising he flung his body over towards Cadoual in a blind fury, plucked his legs from under him before he knew what was coming, and the two men grappled fiercely among the slithering fish. Cadoual foamed curses and fought anyhow; but the blazing devil that for the moment possessed Alain wasted nothing on words. All it wanted was the feel of Cadoual's throat crumpling under its fingers of steel, or the sound of his black head pulping against the side of the boat or the pieces of rock below.

Alain Carbonec was never nearer murder than he was at that moment. When man and devil come to grips like this, the devil wins the fight and the winner's soul as well. Never was Alain Carbonec's soul in greater peril than when his fingers worked into Cadoual's throat at last, and he felt the muscles slipping about under them like a bundle of

AN UPHEAVAL

greasy cords. He was panting through his nostrils like a bulldog. He threw up his face for air while his fingers still gripped the other's throat.

Far away to the east the light on Grand Bayou beat softly in and out like the pulsing of a golden heart. It whispered "Barbe! Barbe! Barbe!" It beat through the whirling red mist that filled his brain to bursting, and his exultant hands reluctantly loosed their grip.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" he murmured, aghast at the recognition of that which was in him. And the devil slipped over the gunwale into the black water.

No word passed between the two men till they had landed in the early morning and had got the fish ashore, washed the nets, and made the boat all ready for the next cruise. Then said Alain quietly:

"It is better that we part before worse comes of it. There is that between us which makes for trouble. You will get another man, and I will get another place."

"It is all one," growled Cadoual. "Go where you will."

"If ever I hear of you saying one word against Ma'm'selle Carcassone I'll shake the life out of you, as I came near to doing last night," said Alain, and walked away home to bed.

Alain found no difficulty in getting another place. He was recognised as a clever seaman and a lucky

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

fisherman, and his bright face alone was worth its place in any man's boat; but Cadoual found it no easy matter to make good his loss. He fell back for a time on riff-raff and ne'er-do-weels, which even so small a place as Plenevec could supply, and after a time he laid up his boat and let the fish go in peace.

For a week Pierre Carcassone had not been ashore, and then Alain discovered that his supplies were being taken out to him by one of the shore boats to save him the necessity of coming for them.

That day Alain clambered down the side of Cap Réhel and swam out to the Light; but the door was bolted against him, and he could not get in. He climbed the iron rungs and beat on the door with his fists; but he might as well have hammered the side of the lighthouse. So he chose a smooth slab and sat in the sun to warm and dry, and whistled gayly to let Barbe know that he was there, and to show Pierre what good spirits he was in.

"Alain!" dropped softly from the gallery at last, like a voice from heaven, and he jumped up and stood below her.

"How goes it with thee, Barbe?"

Her face looked shadowed and downcast from where he stood. He moved farther out, and the shadows lifted somewhat.

"I am sad for want of thee, Alain. And thou?"

AN UPHEAVAL

"Shall I climb up to thee by the rod?" he said, pointing to the thick rope of twisted copper which ran up the shaft to let the lightning down into the water.

"Nay, I like thee better at a distance, with a whole neck," she said.

"I believe it would carry me."

"If you try I shall go inside."

"How long is this to go on, Barbe? I am like a starving dog for want of thee."

"We must wait. Perhaps he will think better of it. I will have nothing to say to George Cadoual—not if he came every day for a hundred years."

"I have said good-bye to him. He came to look at me as if he would like to knock me on the head. One cannot work with a man who looks at one like that. It is not comfortable."

"What will you do? You won't go away and leave me all alone, Alain?"

"I will never go away until I take thee with me, Barbe. I am in Jan Godey's boat, and all goes well. Cadoual is away on a journey, so he will not trouble thee for a time."

"*Dieu merci!* Would he might never return from it!"

"That is too much to hope for. But if he worries thee I will break his neck if thou sayest the word, dearest."

So they talked for a time, and Barbe was cheered

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

by his visit; but as for Alain, he would have given all their words for one sweet kiss.

Twice again in similar fashion he visited her, and their love but grew the stronger for the scantiness of its nourishment. For love, once firmly rooted, has hidden springs to draw from though all around be drought and desert sand or solid rock and salty sea.

Then Cadoual returned from his journeying, but met no warmer welcome from Barbe when he rowed out to the Light than he had done before; and yet he seemed satisfied with his visit.

When Alain scrambled up out of the water two days later he saw with surprise and satisfaction that, for the first time since his interview with Pierre, the door of the Light was open. He needed no invitation, but ran up the rungs and entered.

Pierre was sitting smoking in the living-room with a face of gloomy intention. He had been waiting for him for the last two days.

As soon as he saw Alain he called, "Barbe!" and Barbe's voice answered from the room above, and she came slowly down the ladder. At sight of Alain her face flashed into light. She gave a glad cry and ran towards him.

"It is thou, Alain?" and she glanced with quick surprise at her father, and wondered what it meant. Could the hoped-for time have come so soon?

Then Pierre raised his hand with a sharp

AN UPHEAVAL

"*Tenez!*" and there was that in his face that chilled their leaping blood and filled them with foreboding. He placed a chair in a certain position for Alain, and another not far from it for Barbe, and in a harsh voice said, "Sit!"

At the word they sat and looked at him in wonder.

"Now, listen!" he said through his teeth, and inside his sallow cheeks they saw his jaws grinding against one another. "Eighteen years ago that happened which broke my life. I came home from a voyage across seas, and found my home broken up and my wife gone away with another man, one Paul Kervec. I followed them up and found them here. I came in upon them unawares. Kervec sat *there*, where you sit"—he pointed at Alain. "My wife sat *there*, where you sit"—he pointed at Barbe.

They both sat staring at him in wide-eyed wonder, which changed instantly to horror.

"Kervec I stabbed before he could rise. He fell on the floor in a heap just there where you sit. My wife tried to get to the ladder, but I caught her by the hair and pulled her back. She begged for her life; but it was past that, and I killed her there in the corner behind the ladder. Upstairs were their two children, a boy and a girl. I was tempted to kill them, too, but I did not. I tended the light that night, and next morning carried the children

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

to Plenevec, and gave myself up. They understood my reasons, and that I could not have done otherwise. The girl was taken by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart at St. Pol; the boy was taken away to Plougastel by a sister of Kervec's, and brought up there under her own name of Carbonec. You are the boy," to Alain, who sprang out of his chair in a fury of amazement; "and you," to Barbe, who sat white and trembling, "are the girl. Now—you see——"

"It is a lie!" foamed Alain; "a lie!—a lie!"

"Ask your aunt at Plougastel," said the old man grimly.

"I will ask her, and then I will cram it down your throat——"

"*B'en!* Ask her first."

"I have kept my hands off you because you were—because I believed you to be Barbe's father. If you are not, then——" And he seemed like to spring on the old man and shake the life out of him.

"*Eh b'en!*" said Pierre, backing away, "I have behaved like one to her, and it will not help you to kill me."

"Oh, Alain, Alain!" wailed Barbe, who had sat stunned by the blow. "Is it possible? Is it possible?"

"No, it is not possible," stormed Alain. "It is a vile lie coined by that—man, to part us, Barbe.

AN UPHEAVAL

Sister of mine thou art not, I swear, for I love thee as never brother loved sister since the world began."

"And it is not as a brother that I love thee, Alain."

"*Mon Dieu!* no, I should hope not. Do not believe it, Barbe. It is all a lie." And then, as the thought suddenly struck him: "But, *Dieu-de-Dieu!* if thou art my sister, Barbe, then it is I who should have the care of thee, and he has no claim on thee. Come with me, dear one, and I will care for thee."

For a moment they all three stood stock-still staring at one another: Barbe with a sudden light of hope fulfilled in her eyes; Alain flaming with love and wrath; Pierre caught in his own toils, for, in spite of all his thinking, he had not thought of this.

"Run up and get your things, Barbe, and I will drop the boat," said Alain.

"No!" cried Pierre. "You are at all events my daughter by adoption. You shall not go;" and he moved towards the ladder, as though to stop her.

"You!" shouted Alain, swinging up a chair by the back. "You are finished. You have made enough trouble in the world. One little bit more and I will send you out of it in pieces;" and he towered above the shrinking man, and seemed double his usual size, while the other dwindled before him.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Go, then, Barbe," said Alain. "I will await thee here;" and Barbe's white feet twinkled up into the gloom above.

She ran up joyfully, all a-quiver with delicious tremors at the thought of going away with Alain. How her heart had ached, till her body ached in sympathy, just for the sight of him! And here she was going away with him—alone with Alain. Glory! The very thought of it was so upsetting that her head was in a whirl. She could scarcely think what to take and what to leave, and her hands trembled so that they would not answer to her will.

To go away with Alain! She hung over the black oak chest where her few possessions were kept. She took out one thing after another, and already they looked strange to her from the change that was in herself. Her point of view had altered in the last few minutes. Her life had been overturned and everything was to begin anew, for was she not going away with Alain? With Alain!

Then, as the first tumultuous shock of it wore off, and her brain began to work more calmly, her hands clenched themselves tightly on the rim of the oaken chest, and her eyes grew thoughtful—grew fixed and dark with the intensity of her thought. She gazed down into the chest with so fixed and gloomy a stare at last that one might have thought a corpse lay hidden there, and that she had turned up some of its bones. Minette leapt softly into the chest

AN UPHEAVAL

and began daintily poking about to find out what was wrong, and Pippo turned over the things on the floor with his inquisitive beak, and eyed them sagely with his one eye. But Barbe paid no heed to them, and presently she sank down on the floor among her poor little belongings, her head drooped down on to her arms, and she wept stormily though in silence.

For the realisation of what she had been going to do came suddenly upon her and struck her like a blow.

Alain's sister! Never! Her whole being revolted at the thought.

Alain's—*sister! Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* It could not be. She did not want him as a brother. As everything else, her whole being cried aloud for him. But—*his sister!*

She flung the things back into the chest, and got up heavily and went down the ladder.

The men stood fronting one another in silence.

"Alain," she whispered, "I cannot. It would be like believing it. It is not possible——"

"But yes, thou shalt come with me, Barbe," he cried, with an angry stamp. "We will prove it a lie; but I cannot leave thee here with him. By his own words I have more right to thee than he. Come, dearest, and I will see to thee."

He threw his wet arm round her and drew her to the lower ladder.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"But not as thy sister, Alain!" she cried, trembling under his arm.

He bent and kissed her working lips, and showered hot kisses on her flaming face.

"Dost feel like a sister to me?" he said. "Do I kiss thee like a brother?"

"My man! my man!" she cried, knitting her arms round his neck and straining him to her with all the wild abandonment of her love.

How often in the coming times their thoughts turned back to that first all-too-brief voyage towards the new life! For Alain could hardly row for delight of her presence. His blue eyes blazed with rapture on her blushing face, downcast, in spite of the tumultuous joy that was in her, lest there should be any truth in Pierre's revelation. When his gladness bubbled up beyond the power of looks to express, Alain drew his oars up short to the rowlocks, and flinging back his yellow locks, he scrambled precariously over to her, fell on his knees before her and drew her down to him and kissed her passionately. Once, after raining kisses on her face till she covered it with her little brown hands, he bent and wildly kissed her feet till, with a startled exclamation, she drew them up under her short blue skirts.

"Little sister! little sister!" he laughed with scorn of Pierre and his lies. "I could almost eat thee for very love."



AN UPHEAVAL

“Do not say it, Alain. I will not be thy sister.”

“Not for one moment, beloved. Sisters are good, no doubt, though I never had one; but a wife is worth them all, and thou shalt be my wife, my very own.”

They looked back for a moment at the tall white shaft gleaming cold against a great black rain-cloud that was driving up from the west, then they turned the corner into the bay, where Plenevec lay in front, and Alain rowed swiftly ashore.

CHAPTER X

HE COMETH NOT

“**N**OM-DE-DIEU! What is this?” said the idlers on the shore at Plenevec, as the blunt nose of the lighthouse boat bumped up the shingle.

“It is Pierre’s boat from Grand Bayou,” answered one.

“It is Alain run off with old Pierre’s daughter,” said another.

“La Carcassone! *Tiens*, how pretty she is!”

“What a shame to hide her over there so long!”

“And where is Cadoual? Where is George? He is missing the treat.”

“Let George look after himself, *mon beau*. It is the one thing he is good at.”

Alain led Barbe over the unaccustomed shingle to the firmer ground above, and straight along the road to Veuve Pleuret’s cottage, where he lived.

The old lady received them with many exclamations of surprise.

“This is Ma’m’selle Barbe of Grand Bayou. She is to stop here for a few days, Mère Pleuret,

HE COMETH NOT

and you will take care of her. She will sleep in that other bed in your room."

"*Bien!*" said Mère Pleuret. If Alain had asked her for her own bed she would have turned out gladly; he was so very like her own boy who was gone.

"Now I will take back that boat, or the old hunks will be saying I have stolen it," said Alain. "Take as good care of her as if she were your own, Mère Pleuret," he said, and kissed Barbe with control, and in his exuberance kissed the old lady also, which made her eyes swim with pleasure. "In two hours," he said to Barbe, "I will be back, and then we shall see. M. Gaudriol will tell us what is the truth."

The two women watched him along the road till he turned down the shingle, and then, as they lost sight of him, they looked at one another, and the eyes of both shone softly.

"A fine lad," said Mère Pleuret, "and a good one, and very like my own that was drowned. You are going to marry?"

"Yes," said Barbe, full of faith and hope. And the old lady, having no idea of all that lay behind the pleasant face of things, questioned her discursively as to her father, and her life on the Light; and Barbe answered her with simple caution and gave no hint of the actual state of matters.

If only they had met Sergeant Gaudriol that day,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

how differently all might have gone with them, and what heart-breaking times they might have been saved! But Gaudriol was away at Plouarnec on official business and did not get home till night, and then it was too late.

The hours passed, the storm of rain swept over them to the thirsty land behind, the sun drew down red and angry towards the rim of the sea, and Barbe Carcassone sat waiting for Alain to come to her.

She wondered what was keeping him. She wondered how the old man at the Light would get on without her. Mère Pleuret tried to draw her into conversation at times, but as the day wore on Barbe was too full of thought for talking.

The Light gleamed rosy white, then loomed grey in the eye of the sun with a glimmer of gold at each side, then stood cold and pale like a sheeted ghost; and while she gazed the golden rays burst out from the top so suddenly that she started. She had never seen them from the land before.

Still Alain did not come. What could be keeping him?

Mère Pleuret set her surprise to many words as she prepared the evening meal; but Barbe sat dumb with anxiety and could eat nothing.

The night drew on and deepened, and still he did not come. When Mère Pleuret was ready to go to bed she expressed the opinion that Alain had come



HE COMETH NOT

to an untimely end, with the outspoken frankness of one who had already suffered and knew the futility of hope. Then Barbe shut herself in behind the sliding panels of the other box-bed, and sobbed silently because of the exceeding strangeness of everything.

Fears and forebodings racked her all through the night. She fell into fitful sleep at times, and dreamed horrible dreams, and woke up in the cramping agonies of a sorely tried heart. Yet at the core of all her trouble there glowed a tiny gleam of gladness. Alain loved her; she loved Alain. Though all the world cracked and tumbled about her in ruins, as it seemed like doing, that was one thing to cling to and hold by, and she would never let go of it. She told herself hopefully that Alain would come in the morning, and then prayed earnestly, pitifully, that it might be so.

She said to herself that no harm could come to one so bold and strong and skilful; but she knew that the sea was stronger still, and still more cunning, and that the boldest and bravest go down into it and come back no more.

Her face was sharpened with anxiety, and her eyes looked larger than ever by reason of the dark circles round them, when she came out into the dawn to look for Alain. The boats were coming in one by one. A wild hope sprang up in her that he had had to go with the rest before he found time to

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

come and see her again last night. It would not be like him, she thought; but there might be things she did not understand.

The other girls and women were there awaiting the boats also. They eyed her with curiosity; she had been scarcely more than a name to most of them for so long. They whispered among themselves. They were not openly rude; but Plenevec had never wasted its time on polishing its manners.

Barbe, accustomed to the wide solitudes of the Light, was greatly troubled by this sudden concentration of observation upon herself.

She knew not whom to ask about Alain. She felt herself a stranger in a strange country. In spite of her anxiety for information, she was about to flee back to the shelter of Mère Pleuret's shadowy wing when her eye, casting wildly round, fell on a majestic figure in blue and white which had just come along the road and was eyeing her steadfastly. Sergeant Gaudriol had heard of her arrival the night before. He had looked in at Veuve Pleuret's as he passed. He came up to her at once.

"*Tiens, ma'm'selle!* It is good to see you here," he said.

She looked up into the old grizzled face, and liked it, and knew she could trust him; for, if the official mask was somewhat hard and grim, as became the representative of the law, the simple kindness of tolerant age looked through the eyes—

HE COMETH NOT

eyes which had seen so much in their time, and had come now to prefer the brighter side of things, perhaps because they were growing dimmer themselves.

"M. Gaudriol?" she gasped. For Alain had spoken to her of the old man, and only last night he had said, "Gaudriol will tell us the truth of it."

"But yes," said the old man delightedly, "I am Gaudriol. And how do you know me, ma'm'selle?"

"I have heard much of you, monsieur, from Alain."

"Ah, yes, Alain! The fortunate Alain! And where is Alain, ma'm'selle?"

"But, monsieur, that is what is troubling me. He took the boat back to the Light yesterday afternoon, and he has never returned. And, oh, monsieur, I fear for him!" And her hand flew to her heart.

"He went to the Light yesterday afternoon, and never returned? Stay, I will inquire down there," and he went crunching down the shingle to the noisy crowd round the boats.

"Jan Godey, where is Alain Carbonec?"

"*Mon Dieu!* M. Gaudriol, that is what I would like to know. He never turned up last night, and left me short-handed," grumbled Jan.

"Who has seen him?" asked the old gendarme.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

But no one had seen him since they all saw him row out to the Light after bringing ma'm'selle ashore.

How came ma'm'selle to be ashore? Gaudriol saw at once that the key to the matter probably lay there, and he strode back to Barbe.

"Why did he bring you ashore, ma'm'selle?" he asked quietly. "What has happened?" He had a dim, far-down fear that the Light might possibly have been the scene of another tragedy not so very different from the one it had witnessed before.

Barbe hesitated, and Sergeant Gaudriol saw it.

"Tell me just what happened, my dear," he said. "Tell me everything, or I cannot help you."

"Oh, I will tell you everything, monsieur!" Alain said you would tell us the truth of it."

"Bien!"

"It is this way, monsieur. We love one another, we two, very dearly——"

Gaudriol nodded.

"And my father—that is, M. Carcassone—he did not want me to marry Alain——"

"Why?"

"I think he did not want me to leave him alone. He would not let Alain in; but he swam out through the Race many times to see me, and I spoke with him from the gallery. Yesterday he opened the door to Alain; and when Alain came in he called me down and told us about the—the murders——"

HE COMETH NOT

long ago, and he said we were brother and sister, and so we could never marry. But it is not as brother and sister that we love one another, I assure you, monsieur. I would give my life for Alain, and he for me. We did not believe it because we do not feel to one another as brother and sister. But though we did not believe it, Alain said he would not let me stop there. Since he was my brother, he said he had the right to take care of me, and he brought me ashore. Then he took back the boat and would swim to Cap Réhel, as he always did——”

“*Mon Dieu! Cap Réhel!*” ejaculated Gaudriol.

“But he had done it so many times, monsieur,” she said, with quick anticipation of her own fears, “and he is so strong and bold, and nothing ever happened to him. He said he would be back in two hours. But he has never come.”

The old gendarme's brows knitted into bushes of perplexity, and he thought deeply and quickly. It might only be an accident. Alain might be lying, bruised and broken, somewhere about Cap Réhel. Though, *ma foi!* if it was at the bottom it was little they would ever see of him again, as the tide had come and gone since then. He might have dared the Race once too often, and gone under, strong swimmer though he was. And—and—yes, it would up in spite of him—it might be that either of

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

these things—bad as they were; ay, even though they were final—would be the least of the things that might have happened; for it might be that the then had quarrelled on Alain's return, and that Grand Bayou Light had once more drunk hot blood.

"Wait you, my dear," he said to Barbe at last, "with Mère Pleuret and keep your heart up. I will go to the Light myself and see if he is there. He might have hurt himself and been unable to come back."

He spoke hopefully, and she was cheered somewhat.

"And the other matter, M. Gaudirol?" she asked anxiously, and with colour in her cheeks. "It is not true that I am Alain's sister?"

"I have never heard it said till this moment, my dear, and I do not believe it. When Pierre came across that first morning after—when—you understand," he said, with an embarrassed nod—"he carried you on one arm and the boy on the other. It is nearly nineteen years ago; but I remember it all very clearly, for it was a terrible affair. He came up to me as I stood just about here where we are standing now, and he told me what he had done; and he said—but yes, I recall it all—he said, 'This is my child, and this is his.' *Voilà!*"

"God be thanked!" she said gratefully. "I knew it could not be true. He said it just to part

HE COMETH NOT

us. It was not well done; but I would sooner have him for a father than Alain for a brother. You are quite, quite sure, monsieur?"

"I am quite sure of what he said that day, my child; but we can make surer still from the records, and I will see to it."

"I thank you with all my heart," she said; and he gravely saluted her and crunched away down the shingle.

"Jan Godey, I want to the Light. Who will take me?"

"*Bien*, M. Gaudriol," said Jan obsequiously. "In two minutes I will be ready, if you can put up with the remains of the fishing. There will not be time to wash down."

"It will do, *mon beau*."

And presently M. Gaudriol, having settled himself comfortably on Jan's coat to save the spick and span of his blue and silver from contamination, and looking somehow monstrously out of place there, the bluff-bowed lugger was running swiftly seawards, bearing the Law to the Light.

"You fear something wrong, M. Gaudriol?" asked Godey, making play with so unique an opportunity of cultivating friendly relations with the great man.

"But no, *mon beau*, not at all. But accidents are always possible, and I want to find that boy."

"A clever lad and a good fisherman," said Jan.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Cadoual was a fool to lose him. But, *ma foi!* it's not for me to complain."

The tide was against them; but the wind was fair, and they made a quick run to the Light. The door was open and there was no one in sight.

"Wait for me," said the gendarme, to Jan's disappointment, and began the laborious ascent of the perpendicular rungs.

It was not the easiest of matters for his stiff joints and harnessed limbs, but he drew himself up into the doorway at last, cocked hat and all, and disappeared within. It was almost an unknown country to him; for Pierre had never encouraged visitors, and Gaudriol's duty had always lain on solid earth, for which he had many a time devoutly thanked God. He got all he wanted of the sea from the vantage-point of dry land, and he never even walked on the shingle if he could help it.

He glanced cautiously round the dim interior. He was not without his fears of what he might find there. He had a very definite recollection of what he had once found there; and what had been might be.

The lower story yielded nothing. He climbed the ladder. Nothing there, and no signs of life above. Up again, and still again, till he stood in the lantern, and passing out to the gallery, he looked down on Jan Godey lying apparently asleep in the idly rocking boat sixty feet below. To all

HE COMETH NOT

appearances they two had the place entirely to themselves. So down again for more minute research, in great relief at finding so far no signs of any tragedy.

Some one had tended the light all night. The only question with him was whether it was Alain or Pierre, and which of them had murdered the other.

As he stood in the sleeping-room the rough breathing of a sleeper came to him through the closed panel of one of the bunks. He strode across and laid his hand on it. The answer to his puzzle lay behind it. He hesitated for one second, half dreading what he might find there. Alain? Pierre? In either case trouble. If Alain, then his worst forebodings would be realised. If Pierre, then he would fear much for Alain.

He gently rolled back the panel—Pierre, sleeping the sleep of the just and of the man who has kept watch while the rest of the world slept.

Sergeant Gaudriol had all his country's belief in the efficacy of the sudden surprise, the unexpected challenge, the endeavour to entrap, the assumption of knowledge, in dealing with a suspect. He laid his hand on Pierre's shoulder. The sleeper's breathing softened, his eyes opened, and he looked vaguely at the grizzled face and the imposing cocked hat bending towards him.

"Where is Alain Carbonec?" asked Sergeant

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Gaudriol, and Pierre sat up with a start. Gaudriol's eyes missed no slightest change in his face. He saw the startled look in the half-awake eyes, and he saw the colour ebb till the face was leaden under its tan. And he said to himself, "Alain is done for, and this man knows."

And again to Pierre, and more harshly this time, "Where is Alain Carbonec? What have you done with him?"

And Pierre knew that in the eyes of the law, as represented by Sergeant Gaudriol, he was already condemned unheard.

"What is it, then?" he growled. "I do not understand."

"Alain Carbonec is missing. He came here. He never returned. What have you done with him?"

"But, Sergeant, I know nothing of him. I did not even see him when he came back. We had had a dispute, and I had had enough of him for one day. He left the boat where he found it and went his way."

"Aye. Where to?"

"How should I know? I tell you I never even saw him."

"And no one else has seen him since."

"*Eh b'en*, that is not my affair."

"Have you killed him as you killed his father?"

"Ah! That's it, is it? And why should I kill him, Sergeant Gaudriol?"

HE COMETH NOT

"God knows. Doubtless you hated him because he was his father's son, and still more because he loved your girl, and she him. First you try to part them with lies, and when that failed you make away with the lad."

"But I tell you I never even saw him. I only knew he had been here by finding the boat in its place."

"*Eh bien!* We shall see. If we find him, good. If not——"

"If not you will try to make out that I have made away with him. *Eh b'en*, go ahead! A man can but die, and I am sick of it all."

But whatever Sergeant Gaudriol's own suspicions might be, he had nothing beyond them to act upon. Pierre might be telling the truth. Obviously the one thing to be done was to find Alain's body, if that were possible; but he had to acknowledge to himself that the chances of doing so might be small. If Pierre had gone the length of killing him, it was hardly to be expected that he would not have gone the further length of disposing of his body. Certainly on that other occasion he had boldly avowed his crime and accepted the consequences; but then the motives were, from a French point of view, not absolutely inadequate, whereas in this case no court in the country but would exact full payment for the crime, if crime there were.

The first place to search was Cap Réhel, in case

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

the matter was simply one of accident. So Gaudriol went gingerly down the iron rungs and kicked the rope till Jan Godey woke, and they loosed and went in a wide curve through the run of the Race, and came in under the frowning Head.

They landed there and made careful search among the boulders; but their time was short by reason of the rising tide. They embarked again and coasted along close inshore, to and fro, till they had satisfied themselves that Alain's body was not there at all events. Finally, Sergeant Gaudriol reluctantly gave the matter up for the time being, and went home saying to himself that they would have to wait till the sea gave up its secret; for the scour of the Race sooner or later carried most things down to Plenevec beach.

He had a faint hope that there might be some news of the missing man at the village, but a sight of Barbe Carcassone's eager face as she ran down the shingle to meet them showed him that the hope was futile.

The cocked hat wagged mournfully at her. "No news, no trace, no nothing!" he said. "But don't lose heart, my child. He'll turn up all right yet."

But in his own mind he doubted it, and his tone carried no conviction. And Barbe's heart, which had buoyed itself on the Sergeant, sank hopelessly.



HE COMETH NOT

"He is dead," she cried, "or he would surely have come!"

"If he is dead some one shall pay for it," said the Sergeant.

"Ah, it is only Alain I want!" she cried.

Words are but poor medicine for a stricken soul; and vengeance will not fill the place of one who leaves an empty heart behind.

CHAPTER XI

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

ALL that day, after Sergeant Gaudriol returned from his fruitless errand, Barbe haunted the beach, and the wistful hope died gradually out of her eyes and left in them nothing but despair.

The other women, with but a dim comprehension of her trouble, offered her rough words of comfort, which comforted her no more than alien words can ever do. The despairing eyes in the dark circles of the eager white face evoked their sympathy and loosed their tongues. A discriminating reserve had no place in the Plenevec character, especially in the gentler—rather let us say the female—sex. They discussed Barbe to her face, and behind her back, long after the feeble lights glimmered in the tiny windows, and doubtless also when the panels of the dark box-beds were slid to. She paid no heed to them, but suffered none the less.

When night fell she found her way back to Mère Pleuret's cottage, and sat before the white ashes on the hearth, drooping and desolate.

"Ma foi! He is dead, without doubt," said the

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

old woman, with the stolid outspokenness of the peasant; "but one must eat all the same."

She insisted on the girl eating some of the thin soup out of the pot over the fire, and a piece of black bread which tasted to Barbe like ashes from the hearth; and she discoursed reminiscently the while of Alain and her own dead boy, whom he now resembled more than ever.

Barbe sat there dry-eyed and silent. Fears wrung her heart into silent sobs of prayer to the Mother of Sorrows, whose own heart had been wrung beyond any heart in the world save one. In the shuddering darkness of that day and night she drew very near to that great heart of pity which, by whatever name it be known, is closed to none, and may be reached by many channels.

She slept little that night, and rose in the morning white and worn and widowed; and when, during the day, Pierre came to the house and bade her come home, she followed him without a word.

Pierre spoke no word to her as they crossed slowly to the Light. He was in his grimmest humour, for the whisper had gone round Plenevec that Sergeant Gaudriol believed that Alain Carbonec had come to his death out there, as his father had done before him, and Plenevec was disposed to consider it not unlikely. They had forgiven Pierre Carcassone one crime because in their judgment he was justified; but this—if it were so—*eh bien!* you

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

understand, this is another affair altogether. Such a fine lad was Alain, and the sight of Pierre's face was enough to make you shiver.

Pierre understood it all perfectly; but he gave them no gratification of a sign of it. He shut his face grimly and spoke no word to any of them.

They climbed the ladder in silence. In silence Pierre ate the morning meal, and then lay down in his bunk. Barbe climbed up to the lantern and went out on to the gallery and gazed with hopeless longing at Cap Réhel, as if it could have told the secret of Alain's disappearance if only it could have spoken. In her anguish she raised her arms towards the frowning Head, as though invoking its help or its pity, and no prayer is ever lost.

It was hard at first to settle back into the old routine after so great an upheaval, and with every fibre of her being tight-strung for news of the missing one. Relief came to her by degrees, however, in the common round of her daily tasks, and she slaved over them as never before. The lighthouse rooms were so immaculate that it seemed like desecration to use them for the ordinary purposes of life. The reflectors in the lantern suffered such tribulation that no shadow of a speck remained upon them. Grand Bayou light shone with a brilliance that evoked half-damnatory eulogiums even in Plenevec.

"Eh bien! He may kill people, this monster of

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

a Pierre; but he knows how to keep a lighthouse," said they.

Pierre, however, had little to do with it. He was rankling under the injustice of the general condemnation of a deed he had not done, and he was sick of it all. He rarely spoke to Barbe, and spent most of his time sulking in his bunk or sitting smoking, with his eyes fixed gloomily on the wall before him. *Dieu-de-Dieu!* Was it not bad enough to have suffered when that had gone before which justified, and at the same time compensated, the suffering? Now he was suffering without reason. That old fool Gaudriol ought to be drowned. And as for those other fools at Plenevec: let them think what they would; it was all one to him.

Once only, on the first night of her return, did Barbe speak to him of her own accord.

He was smoking gloomily before taking his watch up above, when she came silently down the ladder and stood before him. Her face was set like stone. There were even little ridges round the soft mouth showing white through the bloom of the tan. Her eyes burned in their hollows, and her words were the outcome of much anguished thought.

"Where is Alain?" she asked abruptly.

"I know nothing of him."

"He came back here with the boat."

"I found the boat at the beams. I saw nothing of him."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"If you have killed him I shall kill you if the law does not."

She said it very quietly, but in intensity of purpose she looked at the moment capable of it. This was not the Barbe he had been accustomed to; but he recognised what was in her as an old acquaintance of his own, and he showed no surprise. He even looked at her for a moment with something like approval.

"I understand," he said. "It is in your blood. But I have no fear of either you or the law, my girl."

"*Bien!*" said she, "we shall see."

When he turned in to his bunk at early dawn he left the sliding panel slightly open to show how little effect her threat had on him.

She was sitting in the gallery that morning, as was her custom when she had finished all her work below, when a boat turned out of the bay and made steadily for the Light.

It was probably George Cadoual, she thought, and so sat and watched it stolidly and with disfavour; but a sudden shift of the helm showed her the gaudy plumage of Sergeant Gaudirol in the stern, and she jumped up and clung to the gallery rail with her heart fluttering in her throat.

News was coming—good or bad—in either case a certain end to uncertainty; and when one's heart

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

has really given up hope even the certain worst brings a measure of relief.

For the time being—as the result of sleepless nights and overstrained nerves and lack of food, for she could not eat—she knew that Alain was dead. If he had been alive he would have come to her. He had not come, therefore he was dead; and here was Sergeant Gaudriol coming with the news.

She was waiting in the doorway when Jan Godey brought his blunt-nosed boat with a deft sweep up to the gangway; and, when he was satisfied that he could do so without loss of life or dignity, the old gendarme came slowly up the iron ladder.

“You have found him?” gasped Barbe.

“But no, my child, not yet,” said Gaudriol kindly. “Is Pierre upstairs?”

“He is sleeping.”

“Good! I will go up. I like them sleeping;” and he ascended the ladder in front of Barbe.

Sergeant Gaudriol’s mind was in a state of chaos, and he had come to see Pierre in hope of reducing it somewhat.

George Cadoual had been missing for three days past. Madame Cadoual was in a state of furious distress, and demanded him of Sergeant Gaudriol with tears and invectives, and ceased not day nor night.

“*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* What is the good of

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

you, then, you there, if you cannot find me my boy? What in the name of heaven are you here for but to keep things straight? Don't talk to me! Don't talk to me! Get up and do something, you great padded heap of blue cloth! *Sacré-nom-de-Dieu!* Tell me, some one, is it a man, then, that thing in the laced hat that stands mopping and mowing like a gibbering idiot? Oh! let me get at him—" And so on, and so on, till Gaudriol grew tired of it, and the neighbours dragged Madame Cadoual away, foaming and clawing and fairly off her head.

The moment he had heard of Cadoual's disappearance the Sergeant had set to work searching for clues, and following them up to the best of his power.

The matter connected itself at once, in his own mind, with the disappearance of Alain Carbonec. That was inevitable, of course; but what the connection was he had not so far been able to determine. In the meantime he organised search parties and sent them out over the hills and wastes in every direction.

The community was roused out of its natural stolidity by this double disappearance. Mère Buvel drove a roaring trade each night, and the discussions that went on round her trestle tables were listened to by the old Sergeant with keen attention in hopes of finding a grain or two of corn among the windy chaff; but he heard very little that

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

was not familiar to him. Cadoual and Alain had quarrelled and separated, and it was freely stated that they had quarrelled over Barbe Carcassone. Cadoual had gone away on a journey. On his return he had gone out to the Light, as he had been in the habit of doing. Then had come the quarrel between Alain and Pierre, which resulted in Alain bringing Barbe across to Plenevec. Alain took the lighthouse boat back, and no one had set eyes on him again. That same day George Cadoual had started off to visit Landroel on business, but had never arrived there—or anywhere else in the neighbourhood so far as could be ascertained.

Gaudriol listened to it all as it tossed about like a thinning bundle of hay, among the smoke and the damp mugs of cider, and he racked his brains for the meaning of it.

He had been certain in his own mind that Pierre Carcassone had made away with Alain. Was Cadoual also in that matter perchance? Had Pierre and Cadoual joined hands to get rid of Alain, and then had Cadoual—ininitely the weaker mind of the two—fled the country? Or had Pierre made away with Cadoual also? And for what reason? To rid himself of an accomplice? It was possible. In fact, anything was possible with Pierre Carcassone.

George's boat, however, was drawn up high and dry on the beach, and no other boat was missing;

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

but, of course, Pierre might have taken him across from the Head in the lighthouse boat.

Then, as the result of one of Madame Cadoual's tempestuous visits, he extracted from her with infinite difficulty the fact that when George had been away that other week he had been to Brest. That set the Sergeant's ideas churning again.

Cadoual had been to Brest. Brest is just across the water from Plougastel, where Alain's boyhood had been spent. On his return he goes at once to see Pierre. Then comes Pierre's announcement to Alain that he is Paul Kervec's son, and his attempt to separate Alain and Barbe by the declaration that they are brother and sister. It was obvious that the information as to Alain's identity had been given to Pierre by George. Alain might have discovered that, and——

Yes, that was possible, but not like Alain. Still, he was a hot-headed boy, and there was no knowing. A hasty blow following hot on provocation, and two lives may be wrecked in a moment—ay, three; and the thought of Barbe's suffering lay heavily on the old man's heart, for her beauty and her distress had touched him greatly. But there—given three angry men with love and hate thrown in among them, and the possibilities were endless. All the same, he would not believe that of Alain till he had more to go upon than a remote possibility.

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

It was in this frame of mind that he climbed the ladder to Pierre's room, with Barbe at his heels.

Pierre was snoring peacefully, as he had been that other morning.

"But yes, I like them asleep," said the Sergeant to himself as he laid his hand on the sleeper's shoulder; but his remark applied to Pierre as a suspect and not simply as a man, in which capacity he would hardly have claimed a prize for beauty.

"What, then?" said Pierre, opening his eyes and then sitting up with a jerk, and very wide awake indeed at sight of the Sergeant. "Well, what is it now?" he asked gruffly. "Who have I murdered this time?"

"George Cadoual is missing," said Gaudriol; and Barbe, behind him, gave a startled jump. "Have you seen anything of him?" He knew by his eyes, before Pierre answered, that he had not.

"Thousand devils, Sergeant Gaudriol! Am I accountable for every fool that goes a-missing in Plenevec? I know no more of him than I knew of the other."

"When did you see Cadoual last?"

"*Nom-de-Dieu!* I do not know," said Pierre, pondering stolidly. "He came and went——"

"Did you see him the day Alain Carbonec was here?"

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"I think not."

"The day before?"

"Ah, but yes, I remember——"

"He came to you after he had been to Plougastel and told you what he had learned about Alain. Is it not so?"

"That's so."

"And you told Alain how you got that information?"

"I think not," said Pierre, still thinking heavily. "But *la petite* was there and heard all that passed."

"The first time he came, yes. But when he returned with the boat?"

"I never saw him, as I told you already."

"And you know nothing of Cadoual?"

"Neither of him nor the other. *Par-dieu!* I should not wonder if t'other has killed which. They did not love one another, those two."

Gaudriol had drawn blank, and he knew it. He turned to go, and met Barbe's anxious look.

"You have no word of Alain, then, M. Gaudriol?"

"No word yet, my child; but we do not give up hope. It is all a tangle at present, and I have not found the thread yet; but keep up your heart, my dear. Alain is a fine lad, and I do not fear for him."

But there was that in the grim old face which

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

said differently in spite of himself, and Barbe was not deceived.

"Tiens donc! Have you searched the Head?" said Pierre, as the result of his cogitations. "When he brought back the boat he would swim ashore there, as he always did. It would be a simple matter for the other to drop a rock on his skull as he climbed——"

"I searched there after I left you last time."

"Ah—çà!" He said no more, but seemed satisfied with his own thoughts on the subject.

Thereafter, whenever she looked at frowning Cap Réhel, Barbe had terrifying visions of Alain precariously climbing the Head, while George Cadoual bombarded him with rocks from the top. She saw his poor body lying bruised and broken at the foot of the cliffs, till the tide crept up like a stealthy beast of prey and dragged it silently away. She brooded over the ebbs and flows in case it should be passing, and more than once she sprang up and hung over the railing with fear at her heart, thinking she saw the white face tossing in the boiling Pot.

She passed through many phases during those first dreadful days. Since Gaudriol's visit she no longer suspected Pierre; but, all the same, they rarely spoke to one another. The atmosphere of the Light was grim and dark, but the light itself shone brighter than ever.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

All her suspicions centred now on Cadoual, and she hated the thought of him. Once only the idea flashed venomously across her mind that Alain had gone away because of Pierre's lying statement concerning their relationship; but her heart rejected it instantly, and chased it away whenever it showed head again. For herself she had no doubts about that matter, and Pierre's own words that other night when she threatened to kill him confirmed her in her belief.

"I understand. It is in your blood," he had said, and she rejoiced that it was Pierre's bad blood that ran in her veins, for she did not want Alain Carbonec for a brother. Truly Pierre's words were translatable in many ways, but her understanding of them held comfort, and she cherished it resolutely and closed her mind to any other.

By degrees, and broken-heartedly, she took up the old life again—outwardly; but life could never be the same to her, and gladly would she have laid it down. She felt bruised, broken, hopeless, and the thought of the long lonely years that lay before her brought her head to the rail many times a day, and her tears were silent prayers for help and succour.

Of the possibility of Alain being still alive, and of her ever seeing him again, she gradually gave up hope. Hope dies hard; but there is a point at which the strongest cable snaps, and the time comes

ANOTHER MISSING MAN

when the slender threads of hope, which are stronger than any handiwork of man's, reach breaking-point, too. Alain was dead or she would surely have heard from him, and when he went all her life went with him.

She drooped like a waterless flower, and all her old interests became as dust and ashes to her. Minette and Pippo wrangled round her in vain. They went to extremest lengths of provocation without evoking so much as a single look from her. The dawns and the sunsets pulsed and burned unheeded, and as yet only pained her with their memories of happier days. The high-piled argosies sailed the upper blue in vain for her. Her thoughts no longer freighted them with glowing fancies; and the ever-changing sea below was no longer a friend, but a stealthy and inscrutable foe who perchance held the key to this mystery. At times, as she looked on the smooth, swelling waters through her tears, the thought of seeking rest beneath them came down upon her and would not be driven off. Could she have been certain that Alain rested there, the temptation might have been too much for her; but the white seeds planted long since by the Sisters at St. Pol were still in her. She had a simple belief in an after-life when this weary one was over, and her heart told her that that was not the way to enter it.

A time of weary, hopeless desolation, with only



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

an eternity of the same in front of her! Verily love and Alain Carbonec seemed to have brought her anything but joy; and yet, deep down in her heart, at times she would cry, "Alain! Alain!" in a voice that was love itself, though her hand was at her side to still the pain that beat there.

CHAPTER XII

STRUCK DOWN

ALAIN CARBONEC, when he parted from Barbe and Veuve Pleuret that afternoon, rowed gayly across to the lighthouse, hauled the boat up to the beams and left it as he had found it. Then he stripped and twisted his blue cotton duds in a rope round his waist, and cast himself into the tide, just as the raincloud burst and whipped the sea all round him till it hissed like a boiling pot.

He was in the highest of spirits. He did not, indeed, see the end of the matter quite clearly yet; but Barbe was out of Pierre's hands and in his own, which was all to the good. He would see Gaudirol when he got back to the village and get his opinion of this sister-and-brother story—which, for himself, he did not for one moment believe. Gaudirol would certainly help him, for he had shown his liking in many little ways since he came to Plenevec. How they were to get married without Pierre's consent he did not quite see, but they would manage it somehow, and then he would be the happiest man on earth, and Barbe should be the happiest girl.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Dieu-de-Dieu-de-Dieu, how beautiful she was! The blood leaped through his veins at thought of her, and he shot through the waves at double speed because each strong stroke was taking him back to her.

He scrambled ashore under the frowning headland, and found his clothes in the nook where he always left them. They were soaked with the rain, but that was a very small matter. In an hour he would be sitting with Barbe before the fire in Mère Pleuret's cottage. He twisted the blue cottons round his neck, since they would not be needed there again, and set off on his precarious climb round the granite shoulder of the cliff.

It was perilous work, but his fingers and toes found holes and holding, as though by instinct, where holding seemed impossible. The rain hissed on the rocks and beat back in his face. The birds shrieked and whirled around him in a way that would have flung a less hardy climber to his death; but Alain was accustomed to them, and there was that in him now that made him feel as though he had wings himself. He let them scream their fill without hindrance or annoyance, and drew himself up at last among the scant herbage of the cliff-brow, and lay panting his lungs full of it, the smell of it was so sweet after the nauseous passage of the roosting-places. Then he rose and swung down among the great standing-stones that

STRUCK DOWN

the ancients had left, and in among the clumps of prickly gorse by the path his own feet had made.

Then—as he passed swiftly along, full of Barbe and the gladness of living—a figure rose suddenly behind him out of the shadow of one of the great stones. An arm swung, a ragged piece of rock flew, at so short a range that it was almost a blow and failure was impossible, and Alain lay bleeding in the grass. And George Cadoual bent over him, as Cain bent over his brother Abel. It was the *a b c* of murder—the most primitive form of vengeance: the ambush and the stone.

But Alain was not dead. Cadoual had hardly hoped for so much, and his choice of hiding-place had provided for it. He looked down for a moment at his work: the horrid wound in which the blood welled, and gathered, and trickled down through the yellow hair to the grass, and stained it purple-black for a moment, till the rain washed it off: the slackened limbs, but a moment ago springing with full life.

Cadoual had no compunctions, however. The man had been in his way. He had to go. He stooped and gripped the body by the shoulders and dragged it out of the path, and along till he came to a burrow hidden by a clump of furze at the foot of one of the stones. He backed into this on his hands and knees, and drew the body in after him

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

bit by bit till it disappeared, as the rabbit disappears down the big snake's throat. The shaft widened in its descent. The air grew cool and moist, and at last he stood in the damp darkness of a wide chamber with the body of Alain Carbonec at his feet.

His work was not done yet: this was only the ante-chamber. He paused for breath, then struck a sulphur match, which gave him the appearance of a corpse looking down at another one. He lit a candle-end and stuck it on a boulder, and quieted his twisting mouth with a cigarette while he rested from his labours. Then he crept up into daylight again to make sure no traces were left there. The rain had already washed away the blood. He picked up Alain's blue stocking-cap and crept back with it in his hand.

Then he laid hold of the body again, and dragged it with loose-kicking heels over the rough floor to a corner where another dark passage yawned. He went back for the candle, carried it down the passage, and then came back for the body.

And now he went warily, for there was that hereabouts which might be the death of him. He came to it at last: a fault in the rock, where the bottom of the passage slipped away into darkness. He kicked a stone down. It fell, and no sound came back. He had discovered this place when



STRUCK DOWN

he was a boy; it had given him many a nightmare, and he had never been there since.

Without a moment's hesitation, he pushed the body of Alain Carbonec down into the darkness. Consciously, or with the instinctive grasp that never leaves the sailor till the final grip is loosed, the sliddering hands of the wounded man caught at anything that offered. Cadoual's feet were plucked suddenly from under him, his short-cut shriek echoed along the vaulted passage, and the two men disappeared into the darkness together.

Up on its ledge in the passage the candle licked its sharp tongue to and fro as though thirsting after knowledge, and burned slowly to its death.

CHAPTER XIII

BURIED

WHEN Alain came to himself it was to a sense of sickening pain, oppressive darkness, and an odour so evil that he could scarcely breathe.

He could not remember what had happened, for his head was still humming from Cadoual's blow.

He could not make out where he was, nor how he came there.

He had no present inclination to rise and find out; and that was just as well, for, as he discovered afterwards, a too enterprising curiosity might have led to a broken neck.

When he tried to lift his head he turned sick and faint. He was lying on something soft and evil-smelling, and about him there were strange, low sounds; and, though the smell was nauseating, he lay still because nothing else was possible to him.

He must have lain there in a semi-conscious state, with intervals of sleep which made for healing, for a very long time. The next thing he was aware of was a ghostly light which glimmered up at him

BURIED

from below. He rolled over on to his chest and crawled towards it, sneezing and coughing and half-suffocated with the effluvium of his passage.

The light sifted dimly through a ragged archway of natural rock which lay below him. He dragged himself to it by degrees and warily, for the ground sloped sharply, and he had no idea where he was getting to. Then he pushed his head and shoulders through the opening, and saw a sight that took his breath away. It was as though he had come out suddenly into one of those hidden galleries which run round inside a cathedral just where the tall shafts break into the branches of the roof, and was looking down into the great silent interior; a cavern so vast and dim that his eyes could not penetrate its immensities.

Strange, tapering columns hung like mighty icicles in the upper darkness, some long, some short. Their spectral white points alone were visible in the dim light, the roof from which they hung was hidden from him. They were terrible, threatening. He held his breath and waited for them to fall.

Below him, on his own side of the cave, other similar white columns raised their smooth points, like stricken pines clinging precariously to a steep hill-side.

Below them was misty darkness which his eyes could not pierce.

As Alain gazed with wonder and a touch of awe

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

at the vastness and the solemn silence of the place, the light which filtered in through several narrow horizontal slits in the wall opposite to him grew suddenly stronger. It deepened and mellowed till it was pouring through the narrow slits, as through the openings of a Venetian shutter, in slabs of glowing gold, moteless and unquivering, majestic in their solidity. They struck the wall above him and crept slowly up towards the roof, and for all too brief a time the upper part of the cavern gleamed and glittered like a treasure-house.

As a boy he had spent many a day in the caves at Morgat, just across the bay by Crozon, and their wonders could never be forgotten. But, compared with this, Morgat was a fisherman's hut, and not to be named in the same breath, lest this mighty roof should fall and grind him to powder.

Far away below him another solid bar of light stretched across to his side of the cavern, like the single beam of a golden bridge. It disappeared as he looked, and in a moment came thrusting in, again and again, as though in vain endeavour to penetrate the solid rock against which it struck.

The sun, he knew, must be just dipping into the sea out there. When it was gone the cavern would be in darkness. He drew back into the chamber in which he had been lying, and looked carefully round. Since he had got in, there must be a way out; but it was very dim, and he could see nothing

BURIED

in the nature of an outlet. The thin screen of rock between him and the larger cave glowed with soft veins of colour, red and green and yellow on a ground of tender rose-white. They paled as he looked, with the fading of the light outside.

He scrambled through the opening and began to descend the steep rock-wall. It was perilous work, even for a whole head. To a less hardy climber it would have been impossible. The up-standing white pillars helped him. He slipped precariously down from one to another, and they were clammy-cold to his embrace. The narrow golden bar below was thrusting up to meet him. It stopped and grew ruddy as he neared its glow, and almost at once it began to fade.

He scrambled on till he leaned, panting, with his back against the rock and his face opposite the opening through which the golden shaft came.

It was a ragged round hole at the end of a cleft like the archer's window in a castle wall, a cleft that widened inwards—a funnel rather, for it seemed to him that its inner opening into the cave was not wider than his head, while the outer hole might be the size of his fist; and where it opened into the cave the rock had fallen away and left an overhanging arch up which he could not swarm. As the golden dazzle flickered and died he saw, as through the small end of a telescope, the rocks of Grand Bayou

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and the tall white shaft of the lighthouse. Then a bird waddled across the outer opening and shut it all out. In a moment the obstructor was hustled away by another, and he could again see sea and rocks and sky; and then once more it all disappeared as another plump body filled the hole. He shouted, but the birds were quarrelling too much among themselves to heed so feeble a sound.

The light within the cavern grew dimmer every moment. His position was one of much discomfort. Whether he would improve matters by continuing the descent he could not tell; but in any case he could not remain there like a fly on a wall. So, slowly, and with infinite precaution, he slipped and scrambled downwards, down and still down, till it seemed to him that he must be getting into the bowels of the earth, and then his feet came suddenly on rocks and he could go no farther.

Groping with cautious hands and feet, he found a flooring strewn with broken débris from the roof. Now and again he came on the smooth conical pillars, some whole and tapering to a point, some shattered by the falls from above. In the silence he heard the gentle drip, drip of water, and everything he touched was cold and clammy. He felt suddenly and strangely tired with his exertions, and became aware of an aching void beneath his belt which surprised him, since he did not know that he had lain unconscious for nearly twenty-four

BURIED

hours up there in the little chamber where the rock-doves nested.

He wanted food, and he wanted rest. The first he saw no means of obtaining, and his broken head had no suggestions to offer beyond the desirability of lying down again as soon as possible, and keeping quiet.

How came that aching hole in the back of his head? He remembered walking among the ghost-stones on the cliff as he always did. Then had come a crash, and then darkness and the slow awakening amid that evil smell which clung to him still; but where he was, how he came there, and what it all meant, he had not the remotest idea.

He licked the top of one of the conical pillars to quench his thirst, and when that was licked dry, found another and another. When at last he came upon a hollow which seemed drier than the rest by reason of an overhanging ledge, he crawled in, curled round like a tired dog, and fell asleep again.

Up to a certain point sleep may take the place of food to a hungry man; but the time comes when the groaning stomach demands food, food, food, and nothing else will satisfy it. Food of some kind it must have, even though the quantity be small and the quality unusual. The philosopher may argue, the Stoic may endure; but sooner or later hunger will bend or break them. Alain was neither

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

philosopher nor Stoic. He was wakened by the lamentations of his empty stomach, and for the time being his whole mind was bent on filling it.

It was twilight still in the cavern, and that puzzled him at first. He quickly came to learn that it was always twilight there, except during those brief moments when the sinking sun drew level with the infrequent openings. Far above he could dimly see the threatening white pendants which hung from the obscurity of the roof. The little light that trickled in struck full upon them, and in its shifting shadows they seemed to swing slowly to and fro. Whenever he glanced at them they seemed just about to fall, and at first he crept about with bent head and shoulders humped for the crash. But they did not fall, though the ground was strewn with fragments, and in time he grew accustomed to them. Then he became aware of a continuous low murmur up there in the roof: *Coo-roo! coo-roo! coo-roo!* He knew it too well to be mistaken; and in a moment, with the spur of hunger within him, he was scaling the rocky height down which he had come in the sunset.

He found the ascent much more difficult than the descent had been. The wall rose up before him with little more of a sheer at the base than the lighthouse had; fortunately it was not smooth like the side of the Light. On the contrary, it was like a mat of twisted white ropes hanging down

BURIED

the side of the cave; and again, it was like the clinging tendrils of a gigantic creeper laced against the rock, all pure white and slippery with the constant dripping of water from above; and in places it was as though a mountain torrent, flowing down a steep slope, had frozen instantly into solid white rock.

When he came opposite the hole through which the golden bar had shot, he saw that it was broad day outside; and, since the sun shone full on the Light, he argued that it was still morning.

While he looked, a broad-based figure came out on the balcony and stood gazing steadfastly towards the cliff, and he knew that Barbe was back at the Light. For the moment he forgot even his hunger, and stood straining eyes and heart through the narrow cleft. She was nearly a mile away, but the air was very clear and the sun shone full upon her. It seemed to him that her face was sad and anxious, and she stood so long, and looked so earnestly at the cliff, that he could almost believe that she knew he was there and could even see him.

"Barbe! Barbe!" he cried in his craving for her, and it seemed to him that she heard the cry and raised her arms beseechingly towards him.

Not until she went inside the lantern, and left the gallery bare and friendless, could he tear himself from the hole, though his stomach was ravening like a winter wolf. As soon as she had gone he set his face to the rock again, and climbed slowly up

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

towards the opening through which he had first looked down into the cavern.

Hunger and the cooing of the rock-doves pricked him on, and at last he crawled through into the chamber where he had found himself lying when first his senses came to him. The cooing of the doves was all about him. The concentrated smell of their droppings of thousands of years almost suffocated him. The nearer birds scurried past him through the opening into the outer cave. He felt quietly about till his knowing fingers lighted on the little round eggs lying in couples in the flat plates of the nests. He felt them till he found one still warm. In a moment its contents were slipping down his watering throat, and the angry ones inside him leaped at their prey and growled over it as loudly as they had growled over the lack of it. Another and another followed till he had eaten his fill.

Then, to provide himself another meal without that arduous climb, he wriggled out of his jersey, made it into a bag by tying the arms tightly together, and slowly filled it with eggs, which he selected with care and judged by the feel. Then, with his bag in his teeth, he let himself slowly down the slope again.

He stopped opposite the lookout; but Barbe was not in sight. From the shadow of the Light he judged it to be close on midday. She would be inside preparing breakfast. The climbing had

BURIED

tired him unwontedly. He said to himself that he would rest awhile, and then, after another meal, he would find the way out of this hole and get home again.

On the whole he was glad Barbe was back at the Light. She was safe there, at all events, in Pierre's keeping—safer than ashore with George Cadoual prowling about; and no one to look after her but Mère Pleuret. She must, he knew, be sorely perplexed at his absence; but he would go straight to her the moment he got out. *Nom-de-Dieu!* How had he ever got in? He thought and thought till his head grew dizzy with thinking, and yielded nothing by way of return.

Then his thoughts went surging back to that strange statement of Carcassone's that he and Barbe were brother and sister. But he would not have it. He laughed it to scorn, and his laugh rolled up into the roof and echoed there tumultuously till it seemed as though the sound of it would never die away.

It was still muttering hoarsely in distant hollows when another sound caught his ear—a sound so faint that at first he took it to be but a further freak of the echo. He got up and stood listening intently, every nerve in his body straining towards the farther darkness out of which the sound had seemed to come. For full five minutes he stood as motionless as one of the rock pillars around him,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and stilled his very breathing lest it should come between him and that faint sound again. Unless his ears or some trick of the cavern had deceived him, the sound he had heard was a human voice. Very faint, very far away, maybe, but——

But then, he said to himself, one never knows in a cavern. It might be only the wind fluting in some hollow pipe or setting some nice-poised tongue a-humming. A cavern such as this holds mysteries more than a man can learn in a lifetime; and he had heard tell of strange and monstrous things that lived in such places—spirits even. *Dieu-de-Dieu!* but he wished he was well out of it!

He was about satisfied of his mistake, and the keenness of his vigilance was beginning to relax, when the sound came hollowly out of the darkness once more. It was but a groaning breath, a sigh of pain; but it was surely human, and he cried at once, "Who is there?" and started into the darkness in search of it.

As though in answer to his call the sound came again, and then again. It led him round an angle of the rock, and he stumbled blindly among rough-strewn boulders. He followed the sounds, groping with hand and foot, till at last his retractive fingers lighted with a crinkling chill on the hair of a man's head, and a hollow groan came up out of the darkness.

"Who is it? Who are you?" he gasped in mor-



BURIED

tal terror; but another hollow groan was his only answer.

He bent over the head, and his hands told him that the hair was stiff with blood. It was too dark to see anything, though, on looking back, he could distinguish the dim outline of the rock-buttress, round which he had come, standing out against the glimmer of the larger cavern. His first impulse was to drag the man to the light, such as it was, for he could render him no assistance in the dark. His own safety might depend upon this man, since a man who could get into the cavern would probably know the way out again, though indeed it was not so with himself.

Alain put his hands under the man's arms and tried to lift him; but the heavy body hung so brokenly in his hands, and felt so like falling to pieces, and groaned so dolorously, that he was fain to let it lie. He would have given money for a match. His own had been soaked and were useless, but this man might have some. He bent again and searched in the other's pockets, and found matches, a bundle of cigarettes and some money.

He knelt down and struck a match and held it close to the man's face to lose no fraction of the short-lived illumination; and once more the one man looked down at the other in the ghastly, sulphurous glow, like one corpse looking at another. But this time the men's positions were reversed. Half the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

match was wasted before the clear flame broke out and lit up the face of the broken one; and, bruised as it was, clotted with blood, and warped with pain, there was no mistaking it.

“Cadoual!” and the brief match dropped from Alain’s burned fingers.

The wound in his own head throbbed with sudden pain as he stooped, and it came upon him, with the startling inconsequence of a flash of lightning at midnight, that there was some connection between his presence there and Cadoual’s. The meaning of it was beyond him. He understood it no more than the forest trees understand the lightning; but the thought had cleft the darkness and left its mark.

“Water!” murmured the broken man, and speculations as to how he came there and in that condition vanished before his immediate needs.

Alain struck another precious match in order to learn, if he could, if there was any water obtainable in the immediate neighbourhood; but the light glimmered on the near ragged roof of a tunnel-way, which accounted for its dryness.

“I will get you water,” he said, bending down to Cadoual.

“Water! water!” came the husky whisper; and Alain started off the way he had come, racking his brains for something to carry the water in when he should have collected it.

BURIED

When he had groped his way back to his own lair his hand came upon the bag of eggs. He picked up half a dozen and returned with them to the wounded man, and poured the contents carefully down his throat. The process was a wasteful one, for Cadoual was barely conscious, and it was too dark to see; but eggs were more plentiful than matches in that place.

"Water! water!" said Cadoual, with an accession of energy after this meal.

So Alain gathered up the egg-shells which he had kept for the purpose, and went back once more to his own territory to procure the promised water.

After some cogitation he saw how to get it; but it would take time and some labour, and Cadoual would have to wait.

The white side of the cave, up which he had scrambled to get his eggs, was damp with the drippings from the roof. Each drop, no doubt, had its little duty to perform in the slow building of the white columns and mushroom growths and corded muscles of the cave-side. Much of it ran apparently to waste, however, and the white face of the frozen torrent was beaded with moisture, cold and damp to the touch, but almost invisible to the eye.

But he had noticed an occasional drop slip suddenly across a smooth slab here and there with the suddenness of a falling star. It might have been

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

gathering for an hour, a day, a week—he could not tell; but it was water, and water was life. For himself, indeed, he could lick the shorter pillars and the frozen torrent itself, and so keep his thirst within bounds; but that was obviously impossible for the wounded man, and even for himself it lacked the full satisfaction of a flowing drink.

Back once more round the angle of the cave, where his previous passage had impressed him with the fact that the floor was strewn with sharp granite boulders. He returned with a handful of splinters, and set to work scoring a slanting groove across the bottom of the smoothest damp slab he could find, a tiny runlet for the capture and safe conduct of the rock-sweat into an egg-shell, which he deftly propped with stones where the channel broke the edge of the slab.

He worked upwards, and when he looked into his egg-shell after an hour's hard scoring, he was cheered by the sight of a few drops of water in the bottom of it. A careful downward sweeping with his hand increased the supply to close on a teaspoonful, and he carried it at once to Cadoual, whose groans he had heard at intervals all the time he was working.

It was no easy matter to get the precious drops into the wounded man's mouth in the opaque darkness. He could only feel his way, and every touch of his creeping fingers brought forth fresh groans.

BURIED

At the first taste of the water Cadoual raised his hand eagerly to increase the supply, and crushed the egg-shell to pieces against his lips.

"*Tiens!*" said Alain impatiently. "Now you've done it, and now you'll have to wait till I can get you some more."

"Water! water!" craved Cadoual, and Alain left him, to tap the rocks wherever a smooth slab offered and an egg-shell could be propped.

All the time, as he worked, his brain was groping vaguely after the meaning of things: how he came to be there; how Cadoual came to be there; and both more or less damaged, though it was evident that Cadoual's wounds were much more serious than his own.

It was quite certain he had not wounded Cadoual, for his own recollections left him tramping through the dripping gorse bushes, anxious only to rejoin Barbe as quickly as possible. After that all was blank till he found himself lying in the doves' chamber with a broken head and the smells of the ages all about him. Some one had broken his head and conveyed him to the cavern; and some one had apparently done the same for Cadoual. If Cadoual had not been there, and in as bad case as himself, or worse, he would have felt sure it was Cadoual's doing, for Cadoual was the only enemy he had. Then he thought suddenly of Pierre Carcassone and the violence of their last meeting, and it seemed to

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

him that Pierre was the most likely solution of the puzzle. Pierre was slightly mad; of that he felt sure. What more likely than that, in his desire to keep Barbe to himself, he had hit upon the plan of waylaying them separately, felling them from behind, and flinging their bodies into this great grave?

Eh bien! When one murders a man one should make sure he is dead before burying him. If Pierre could get them into the cave there must naturally be some way out, and the only thing was to find it. A broken head was of no great account, anyway. He was inclined to think Cadoual's injuries went further than that; but he had had no opportunity so far of examining him. The thing to do was to find the way out, and he could not conceal from himself that that might be no easy matter.

The roof of the cavern gleamed suddenly iridescent in the rays of the setting sun, and the golden bar came pulsing through the round hole above him, and glowed like a fiery eye on the slabs and whorls of the frozen torrent. He scrambled up at once, with careful avoidance of his egg-shells, to get another look at the outside world, and possibly of Barbe, before the sun sank out of sight.

The Light stood there with the golden glory streaming round it, and, as he watched, Barbe came slowly round the gallery and stood looking longingly towards the cliffs. He clung there, with his back against the damp white wall, till the sun

BURIED

dipped and the lights faded out of the roof, and the world outside began to grow cold and dark; but until he could no longer distinguish her, Barbe stood looking out towards Cap Réhel, and he knew that she was thinking of him, and wondering why he did not come.

It was with a choking in the throat, between a sob and a curse at his helplessness, that he let himself down again to the level. He made another meal off his eggs, and administered another half-dozen to his fellow-prisoner. He also took the opportunity of endeavouring to ascertain the extent of Cadoual's injuries, and came to the conclusion that at least one arm and one leg were badly broken. What more he could not make out; but, from the man's groans whenever his body was touched, he feared there was damage there of still greater moment.

The lair Cadoual had chosen was drier than his own, and he lay down beside him to sleep; but the wounded man's groanings and his incessant husky demands for water made sleep impossible, and at last Alain crept back to the hole he had occupied on the previous night. He fell asleep to the sound of Cadoual's groans; and when he woke once in the night he heard him groaning still, and in the morning he was still at it.

The egg-shells he had placed here and there below his grooves all contained more or less water.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

He carried the fullest at once to Cadoual, and took care this time that it was not wasted. He gave him the last half-dozen eggs, and then climbed the side of the cave for his own breakfast.

The light was still shining in the lighthouse, and the lighthouse itself gleamed like a pearl against the dark western sky in the purity of the early dawn. Even as he watched, the first rays of the sun flashed in the glass, and the feeble light inside showed no more. While he hung there feasting his eyes on it, and grinding his teeth at his impotence to get at it, Barbe came slowly out of the lantern, leaned over the gallery-rail, and gazed earnestly at the sun and at him.

"Barbe! Barbe!" he cried, and raised his futile arms towards her, and came near falling headlong down the treacherous slope.

Not until she went in again did he turn to his climbing, and then he scrambled up resolutely, determined to break out of his prison that very day, and follow his heart to Grand Bayou.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIFE BELOW GROUND

THE rock-doves were still abed when Alain crawled into their chamber; but he went so softly, and slid his hand so cautiously among them that even the robbed ones scarcely murmured. In order to carry with him a larger supply he breakfasted on the spot, chipping the eggs against his teeth and sucking down their contents gratefully.

And as he sat and sucked, a new idea came into his head. He wanted light down below to explore with. Here to his hand was fuel in any quantity. His fingers, as they sought the still-warm eggs, travelled lightly over the twigs and dried grasses of the nests, which felt like the top of a haystack. The pungent bed on which he lay was composed of the same, mixed with the droppings of countless generations of birds, layer on layer, from the time of the Flood. The thought of a fire suggested the idea of cooking. In a moment his cunning hand had a bird by the neck, and before it could utter a cry the warm little body was in his bag. He captured four without moving his position, and with

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

as little disturbance to the rest as came natural to one who had been cragsman before he was sailor. He lay and waited till the birds woke up and flew out for their day's work, and then he set to work himself, scratching out and hurling down the slope great masses of the tightly packed accumulations of the years. The dust came near to smothering him, and the smell to choking him. He sneezed and coughed, and tore and flung, till he could do no more without a rest and a drink, and then he followed his plunder down the slope.

The avalanche had polluted all the whiteness of the rock-curtain, all his tiny channels were choked with dirt, and all his egg-shell reservoirs smashed. It did not matter. He would get out of his prison that day. So he sought a clean cone and licked it dry, and then another and another, till his thirst was quenched.

Then, taking an armful of fuel and his bag of eatables, he carried them to Cadoual's hollow. There he started a blaze, hedged it round with stones, and in a very few minutes one of the plump little rock-doves was toasting over the red-hot core of the oven. His fuel, so far as it was composed of dried bird-droppings, burned with a dull, smouldering glow and a most villainous odour. When a flat nest of twigs and grass came to hand the flames shot up into a crackling flare, which died all too speedily into the dull-red glow again; but the

LIFE BELOW GROUND

very sight of fire and the smell of cooking were inspiriting after a three-days' dietary of raw eggs and calcareous water, and he found himself so ravenous for meat, now that it was in sight, that he could hardly wait till it was properly done.

The disordered senses of the wounded man seemed to be stirred by these things also. Once, when Alain turned from the fire, he found Cadoual's eye fixed on him with a look which he did not understand till later.

"Thou!" groaned the wounded man. "*Dieu! Dieu!*" then closed his eyes to shut out the sight, and broke once more and half-unconsciously into his husky murmur for "Water! water!"

"Have an egg," said Alain, and chipped one and poured it down his throat. "When we've had something to eat I'll see if I can find water. Do you know the way out of this cursed hole?"

But Cadoual only groaned and closed his eyes the tighter. It was beyond belief and altogether intolerable. He had killed this man and flung his body into the bottomless pit, and here was the victim waiting on his murderer, and tending him as if he were his own brother.

But even that was nothing to the pains he suffered. Every bone in his body seemed broken; every attempt at movement was an agony past the bearing; every breath a horror of sharp knives piercing his chest and rending his sides. He

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

groaned because silent endurance was beyond him. He cried for water because his throat was hard and dry as a board. The bitterness of living was so great that death would have been a relief; for it was not to be believed that anything that might come after could be worse than the agonies he was suffering. Nothing that could happen to his soul could equal the tortures of his mangled body.

Alain divided the rock-dove with his knife, and inserted some choice morsels between the sick man's lips. His grinding teeth sucked them in, but his throat could hardly swallow them. They had no taste to him; but there was nourishment in them all the same. Alain, understanding something of his difficulty, broke another egg down his throat, and he got on better; but he ate mechanically and without enjoyment, and only because nature and hunger were stronger than the feeble will that was in him. The stirrings of life that the food awoke in him served only to increase his sufferings.

"Water! water!" was his ceaseless murmur.

As soon as he had sucked the bones of his feast, Alain got up to search for water—and the way out. He flung an armful of fuel on the dying fire and went back into the front cavern. His eyes were becoming accustomed somewhat to the dim light. It was as though a great cathedral were lighted only by a few narrow slits away up in the roof at one end, and as if even those narrow slits were

LIFE BELOW GROUND

shaded by Venetian shutters with the slats turned down. In the other direction the vaulted roof and massive sides melted away into the darkness. He could not tell where the roof and sides ended and the darkness began. They might end abruptly just beyond his sight. They looked as if they might run right into the bowels of the earth.

He shouted to get some idea of the size of the chamber, and the tumult that followed startled him as it had done when he laughed. The sound seemed as if it would never die away. It bellowed down the vast hollow and rolled among its hidden arches, and died, and rose like a new voice, and changed its tone and its key, and started new sets of sounds that buzzed and hummed like ghostly organ pipes. And Alain decided in his own mind that the place he was in was a very large place, and that, unless he hit upon it by chance, his search for the outlet might be a matter of considerable time.

However, he went to work systematically, carrying armfuls of fuel over the rough-strewn floor, past the tunnel where Cadoual lay, to the farthest point from which he could catch the glimmer of the dim light in the outer cavern. The window itself he could not see; but the outline of the great rock-shoulder round which he had turned was faintly silhouetted against the twilight beyond, and would always enable him to find his way back. A dull-bronze glow streamed across the cavern from the



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

fire in Cadoual's tunnel behind the shoulder; but that might die down, and could not be counted on as a landmark.

Alain lighted a bundle of the slow-burning punk at his fire, carried it to the great pile he had collected, and stood back, transfixed at the amazing sight that started up all round him in answer to the flames. Morgat had been the wonder of his boyhood; but Morgat was a cockle-shell compared with this. Such magnificence of domes and arches and fluted columns had never even entered into his imagination. Columns that sprang from the floor and reared themselves beyond his sight, smooth and white and regular as the deftest chisel could have made them; columns that hung like gigantic icicles from the darkness of an invisible roof, in awesome sympathy with those that sprouted from the floor to meet them; and it seemed to him that they grew and neared one another as he looked. Some were solid throughout their whole length from floor to upper darkness; some were joined by the narrowest thread, so that the whole upper structure seemed to stand upon a needle-point; and some had not yet met, but were divided by no more than a hand's-breadth. And these were without doubt the most awful to look at; for, their upper lengths being hidden, they seemed to swing in the dancing light and threatened to fall at any moment.

The side walls here also were clothed with

LIFE BELOW GROUND

strange, wild growths of the same white stone: huge corded mats, festoons of ropes, delicate lacery of creeper and tendril, all interwoven and overlapping in fantastic profusion, all growing downwards out of the upper darkness, and where they reached the floor spreading out over it, as though by the superincumbent weight, in rolled-up waves and ridges. Here and there the matted growth crept from pillar to pillar, and in places the walls broke away and showed great black gaps which doubtless led to other caves. As far as his sight could travel, those wonderful white pillars stood ranged in solemn silence, some in groups and some in stately solitude. He wondered vaguely if his were the first eyes that had ever lighted on them.

Then, suddenly, as he gazed eagerly round, he was startled by an impression of stealthy flittings among the distant columns; but a moment's observation told him that they were only the shadows of himself and the nearer pillars cast by the fire upon the more distant ones, and he pushed on eagerly to see what more he could before the light died out.

He went on and on through the pillared aisles till he was brought to a stand before a sight more wonderful than all the rest. From side to side of the cavern ranged a series of narrow columns, for all the world like the great organ pipes in St. Louis at Brest. They were all blood-red, and set so close



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

together that he could see no way through. He travelled from one side of the cave to the other without finding an opening large enough to squeeze through, but with a growing desire to see what lay beyond. A moment's consideration would have told him that, since the barrier seemed impenetrable, there could be no egress that way; but he did not stop to think of that, and time pressed.

Passing his hands round one of the lower cones which was not yet fully married to its mate, he pulled with all his strength against it; but it resisted all his efforts. He raised a hand to the pendent pillar above, and it trembled at his touch. A swift pull and a run from under, and it broke off up above with a sharp crack, falling with a crash and strewing the ground with splinters, while the columns on either side shivered and hummed in sympathy.

He crawled over the cone, and found himself in a wide-open space without a pillar in it. The light of the fire behind him set the great organ pipes pulsing red as though they were filled with blood. The echoes of the breaking pillar were still crashing in the roof when, in the darkness in front, there came a sudden splash as of falling water. He stopped instantly with a thirst upon him which he had not felt a moment before. He stood listening, with bated breath and craving throat, but heard no sound except the sharp cracks that still rang in the distant hollows of the roof; and yet he could have



LIFE BELOW GROUND

sworn to that sound of falling water, and the sudden thirst was in him still.

He pushed on again across a rougher floor. A sudden leap of the flames mirrored the red organ pipes, with bars of fiery gold between them, in a great black pool in front. He ran forward and fell on his knees and drank greedily. The water was sweet and cold, and he was grateful.

The sudden fading of the light told him he must hurry back; so he drank again, and turned and made his way through the rent in the screen. One of the objects of his search was attained. Here was sweet water in abundance; and, moreover, it was evident that the way out of the cavern did not lie in that direction. The fire had sunk into a glowing heap, and he had to make his way back to it with caution, lest a fall against some slender pillar should bring it down upon his head.

Cadoual was still murmuring huskily for water when Alain came up to him; but he had nothing in which to bring water, and all he could do was to crack a couple of eggs down his throat, and then he went on to bring up a fresh supply of fuel.

Then he clambered up the slope to get a cheering glimpse of the Light, and his heart leaped at sight of Barbe sitting in the gallery where he had so often sat with her. She stood up suddenly as he looked, and leaned over to watch something; and presently a boat—Jan Godey's boat: he knew it



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

by the new white patch in the brown lug—floated across the narrow disc of his view and made for the Light. He could distinguish Sergeant Gaudriol's uniform, and he knew that the search was afoot. If only he could have done something—anything—to attract their attention! But he was as helpless as a man in his coffin, and he ground his teeth and clenched his fists at his impotency. Mètres of solid rock lay between him and the face of the cliff, with only that God-given hole as a connecting link. He was very grateful for it, though as yet his gratitude had hardly crystallised into thought, much less into words. His chief feeling was one of regret that the hole was not larger.

He saw Gaudriol climb like a great blue beetle up the iron ladder, and he saw Barbe waiting to receive him in the doorway. He could not see her face, indeed, but he knew that it was clouded with grief and anxiety. He watched till Gaudriol clambered slowly back into the boat, and the boat skimmed swiftly out of his range.

CHAPTER XV

DEATH BELOW GROUND

NOW that he had light to work by, Alain determined to see what he could do towards the patching up of Cadoual's injuries. That the man was badly broken and suffering much pain was beyond question; but, knowing Cadoual and his upbringing, Alain was by no means certain that these things were quite as bad as they seemed from his expression of them.

His examination, however, gentle as he tried to make it, evoked such howls from the patient that more than once he stood back and inclined to leave him alone; though leaving him alone meant, at the very least, condemning him to crippledom for life—if he lived. As to this last, Alain could formulate no opinion. The broken leg and arm he strapped up tightly with strips torn from his own and Cadoual's clothes. The broken head—and it was terribly bruised—he washed and bound up with damp rags carried from the pool beyond the red organ pipes, after he had squeezed a few drops of the water into his patient's mouth.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

All these things were fairly straightforward, and he accomplished them in spite of Cadoual's protesting moans; but when he tried to tackle the disorganised body he had to confess himself at fault. The slightest examination showed damages which he did not know even how to set about curing. It was a bag of broken bones that lay there, and every touch evoked a scream of agony and a prayer for extinction.

"Kill me! Kill me! I suffer!" moaned Cadoual whenever he touched him.

To Alain it seemed, indeed, that his case was hopeless, and that death would be better for him than life; but death was not for him to give.

He made him a couch of layers of fuel; it was decidedly high-flavoured, but softer to lie on than bare rock. He fed him with eggs and scraps of roasted pigeon. He carried him precarious drops of water from the pool in egg-shells and rags, at cost of much time and labour; for at first he had to light a flare each time he went, but by degrees his eyes and hands and feet grew cunning in the dark, and he learned to grope his way along the cavern-side to the pipes, and then along them to the opening.

It really seemed as though all he did for Cadoual but served to increase his suffering. Whereas he had moaned before, now he cried aloud in his agony; and Alain came to fear that the food he

DEATH BELOW GROUND

took, while it quickened his vitality, quickened also his perception of pain. Yet he could not starve the man, nor did he know how to graduate his nourishment down to the point of keeping him in a semi-conscious state. So he continued to share his meals with him, and gave him water whenever he had time to go for it; and all the time, no matter what his hands were doing, his brain was busy on the two absorbing questions: how they got there; how they were to get out—and more especially the latter.

That there must be a way out was obvious since they were there; but the way itself was anything but obvious. Puzzling over it all, he came to the conclusion that since he came to himself up in the rock-doves' nest, that was the way he had got in. The sun was westering, the light in the roof would soon be at its best, and he climbed up again at once to see what he could make of it. But, even when the upper part of the outer cavern was glowing in all the fervour of the sun's last rays, he could make out nothing more in the little side-chamber than that the roof was high above his head and was full of dark shadows. There might, indeed, be openings; but, in any case, they were quite beyond his reach. In no little trepidation as to possible consequences, both to himself and his larder, he struck a match and held it aloft at arm's-length; but its feeble light showed him nothing more, and he did not repeat the experiment, for a spark falling on the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

tinder below would have brought about a catastrophe.

He gathered a fresh supply of eggs and flung down more fuel. The birds had not yet come in to roost, and he preferred to take them as they slept, lest the survivors should take fright and change their nesting-place.

He was thus thrown back, in his search for an outlet, on the cavern itself, and he promised himself that on the morrow he would try the dark archways of the great cave where the pillars were, and follow up tunnel after tunnel till he struck the right one.

Meanwhile he kept his spirits up by thinking how much worse things might have been with him.

Barbe was back at the Light; that was the chief thing. Her fears for him, and her discomfort at his strange absence, would assuredly be great; but the joy of their meeting would wipe all that away. Therein, indeed, he had the advantage over her, since he knew she was safe and well, and she knew only that he had gone away promising to return, and had never come back. But she would never doubt him. Her heart would tell her that if he did not come it was because he could not.

Then he had food and fire. He had Cadoual also, it is true, and from many points of view could very well have dispensed with him. As a companion he was the reverse of cheerful; as an outlet

DEATH BELOW GROUND

for his active sympathies he was unconsciously of service. The child who takes care of a smaller child is bolder than if alone. Quite by himself in that awesome place, Alain's nerves might have got the better of him sooner than they did, for he lacked none of the superstitions of the Breton peasant and sailor; but with Cadoual's crying necessities to provide for he was too busy to think about such things a moment sooner than need be, and familiarity with his strange surroundings had time to breed in him a certain sense of security before the testing-time came.

His day's work had tired him. He made up the fire with a heap of damped punk, shared a dozen eggs with Cadoual, and, by way of payment for his trouble, smoked with vast enjoyment a couple of Cadoual's cigarettes. Then he lay down on a bed of the malodorous fuel which he had arranged for himself in an adjoining tunnel-way, out of direct reach of the sick man's ceaseless moanings, and fell asleep as quickly as if he had been in his own box-bed at Mère Pleuret's.

He woke in the morning to a sense of change. The cavern re-echoed with strange sounds, and he leaped up to see what was the matter. There was a primary sound of roaring, humming, buzzing, and mingled with it the thunderous blows of a mighty hammer; and these were all repeated in a hundred different ways by every hollow and vibrant thing

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

in all the vast apartment. In the first obscure moments of his wakening he wondered vaguely if the great red organ pipes were pouring out infernal music. And across it all there drew, every now and again, a great, strange shuddering sob, as though the very earth itself were in travail.

He ran out to look at Cadoual, and found him dumb through fear or weakness. His eyes were closed, and his face seemed white and pinched in the dull glow of the fire. Alain flung on an armful of fuel and ran towards the front cave where his peep-hole was, and there the roaring was above his head and the flailing of the mighty hammer was under his feet—the solid rock shook with it.

He climbed to his perch, and a shaft of sweet salt air beat against his face and filled him like wine. The lighthouse was a livid white streak against a grey-black sky, and he could see the foam flying over the lantern. The great Atlantic waves leaped at it, and then came racing for the cliffs and broke on them in thunder; the spray shot up like rockets past his outlook, whistling in at the slats of the window away up in the roof, a good hundred feet above him, and came pattering down upon him like rain. Every pendent slab or cone or tongue that could hum or buzz was humming and buzzing its loudest, and each one passed along the sounds with its own variations to the vibratory points of the inner cavern; and there the echoes

DEATH BELOW GROUND

picked them up and flung them to and fro in a great mad medley of strident vociferation, the painful striving after utterance of the dumb rocks. And through and over it all that strange gasping sob, as though the earth were in labour.

He understood all the rest—understood at all events what caused them; but that strange sound, which dominated all except the thunder of the waves on the rocks outside, drew him back into the inner cave, and across it, step by step, among the pillars to the mouth of one of the dark openings. Then, like a cautious man, he went back for a light.

He could not stop to eat, though the deafening vibration of everything about him set his head spinning, and made him feel confused and weak and empty, and very small and feeble. He wanted nothing at the moment but to make certain of the meaning of that great, gurgling sob which shook the air of the inner cave as the great waves shook the walls outside; for, if it was what he thought it was, it might be the way that led to freedom and to Barbe.

With all the fuel he could carry—and though the smell of it nearly choked him, there was yet a friendly sense of familiarity in it—he made his way towards the sound. It came swelling up from one of the dark archways, and he went cautiously in. The hollow way sloped sharply downwards, and a great indrawing of its breath nearly carried

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

him off his feet. Then a pause, and the sob came swelling out again and dazed him with its clamour. He felt along by the rough wall till there came a break in it, and he leaned up against the ragged corner till the roar and the *swoo-o-o-ok* bellowed out of the darkness in front of him. Then he ventured cautiously forward again, for he wanted to save every scrap of his fuel till he came to the sound itself.

Two more breaks he passed in the wall—side-passages he took them to be, running into or across the one he was in—and the sound grew constantly louder. Then a faint light glowed in front, and he stumbled into a wider space, and met the full breath of that wild roaring, and was drenched with a shower of spray—salt sea spray, that came hurtling and hissing at him as if it had been waiting for him, and spattered on the rocks alongside like bullets. He dropped the useless fuel, and sat down where he was, to watch and gather his wits.

Below him a great weltering body of water had just sunk almost out of sight down the incline. He heard it writhing and gurgling in the distance, and saw as through a mist the tortured white surface, through which a ghastly dark-green light seemed trying to penetrate. In a moment the irresistible force outside drove it up again, hissing and roaring with the agonies of its passage, till the whole place boiled high with curdled spume, and the spray



DEATH BELOW GROUND

lashed up to the roof, and the tortured air rushed up the passages and carried the sound of it into the great cavern. Then it sank away out of sight, the spray poured down from the roof, and all the sides of the chamber ran white with streaming laceration, and the air came rushing back out of the cavern.

He groped to one side and sat with his back against the dripping rock-wall. He had hoped to find the sea, and he had found it; but he feared it was not going to be of much use to him.

Somewhere out there the great Atlantic rollers were driven in by the western gale; but until the sea calmed down he could not tell whether there was any possibility of his getting out by the way they came in.

The free, wild rush and roar of it braced him, after the ponderous environment of the cavern, and he sat long enjoying it. It was the sea he loved, or a bit of it; and, even in the agony of its prison-house, it sang to him of wide horizons and the un-walled sweep of waters.

But these things do not fill an empty stomach, and he got up at last and groped his way back along the sobbing passage to the great cavern, and the fire, and Cadoual.

The fire had burned low again, and when he flung on more fuel and looked at his patient, it seemed to him that he was in much the same case. So he hastened to serve him with a breakfast of raw eggs,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and promised himself a more nourishing meal as soon as he could get up to the doves' chamber, since the storm would keep them all at home.

Cadoual's mouth opened mechanically to the taste of food, and as his heavy eyes, all strained and shot with blood, rested on Alain, he murmured, "I suffer! I suffer! Kill me! Kill me! Oh, *mon Dieu!* that I might die."

"Don't be a fool, man! You know I can't kill you. Take another egg," said Alain brusquely.

"Kill me! Kill me! I suffer!" moaned Cadoual, and never ceased to beg for death whenever Alain came near him.

All day long the storm howled and beat and sobbed, and all day long, with all-too-short intervals of stupour, Cadoual moaned his impossible prayer. Just at sundown a brief red gleam shot in through Alain's loophole, and the gale seemed to have slackened somewhat; but a glance at the western sky told him it was only a breathing-space, and that there was plenty more to come.

In the middle of the night Alain woke with a start and lay listening.

"Kervec! Kervec! Alain Kervec!"

It was Cadoual's voice calling him—calling him by the name he was not known by. He sprang up and went round to the dull glow of the fire. Cadoual was sitting up against the rock, a hideous sight. His eyes were starting out of his head. His

DEATH BELOW GROUND

teeth gritted in agony, and there was blood on his lips. His one available hand was clawing the rough rock-wall with a hideous rasping that made Alain's flesh creep.

"Well, then, what is it?" he asked.

"*Ah, v'là!*" snarled Cadoual through his teeth. "I cannot stand it. . . . It stabs into my heart. . . . Death is too long. . . . Give me your knife—your knife!" and his hand reached out towards Alain with clawing fingers.

"Lie down, my friend, and wait the good God's pleasure," said Alain soothingly. "I will get you water."

"The knife! I will die—since you will not kill me. . . . The pains of hell—*Voyons!* you are dead—I killed you—I threw you in here. . . . Do as much for me. Ha, ha! pretty Barbe—she is not for you—not for you—not for you. You are dead, and it was I that killed you."

As Alain looked at him, and the wild eyes glared back into his own, it was borne in upon him that this was the truth—that it was by this man's doing that he was parted from Barbe, by this man's hand that he came there—there for all time, perhaps, never to set eyes on Barbe again except through the narrow loophole of the rock. He took an angry step towards Cadoual, and Cadoual's eyes blazed exultantly.

"Not for you—not for you. She was mine—

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

mine—mine; and I killed you and dropped you in the hole. You fool—you—” Then he choked with blood, and the coughing seemed to rend him in pieces. He drew his leg up in agony and rolled over on the couch, and Alain thought he was dead. But he found him still breathing; and, picking up half-a-dozen egg-shells, he groped away to the pool for water.

Cadoual was lying quietly with his eyes closed when he got back. He went up to him and trickled some water into his mouth. Before he knew it, the knife at his belt was plucked from its sheath and plunged into his back. It was a badly aimed blow, and only caught him on the right shoulder-blade; but before he had recovered from the surprise of it, Cadoual had plunged the knife into his own throat.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

ALAIN CARBONEC'S further experiences in the great cave are so very strange that if you ask me if I believe them myself, I can only reply that I knew the man himself for many years; that he was transparently honest and straightforward; and that, often as I heard him discuss these matters, I never found him vary in the slightest detail from the account he first gave me. Further, I may state that I submitted his statement to a friend of mine, a very eminent professor of zoology, zoonomy and zootomy, whose reply was a demand to be taken forthwith to that cavern.

"But," I said, "all I want to know is whether these things are possible, or if they are only the distorted imaginings of an overstrained brain."

"Possible?" said the Professor with some warmth. "My dear fellow, everything is possible. I know more about these things than any other man this side heaven at the present moment"—the Professor is not an Englishman, I may say—"and I would like to meet the man who is bold enough to

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

put a limit to the possibilities of Nature. When can we start?"

I give you Alain's account of what befell him in the great cave under Cap Réhel, just as he gave it to me.

The wound Cadoual had given him as his final legacy was not dangerous, but extremely painful; and it was so situated that he was unable to treat it as he might have done if it had been in a more accessible place. The knife had ploughed along the right shoulder-blade and gone in somewhat more deeply at the base. He knew that it would shortly stiffen up, and that his arm would probably become too painful to use for a time. So with wise forethought he made his preparations for an off-spell.

With very great difficulty he climbed the slope to the doves' chamber, filled his bag with eggs, captured half-a-dozen plump little habitants, and scratched down fuel enough to last him many days. He accomplished the descent in safety, and conveyed his plunder by degrees to the tunnel-way; but the sight of Cadoual's body lying there, and the recollection of the thirst that had tortured him, decided him on making a change. So, in many slow and toilsome journeys, he carried everything he was likely to want through the break in the red organ pipes, into the pillarless hall by the pool.

CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

He sought out a niche there, and formed camp by starting a fire. Then he bathed his wound as well as he could in the pool, and strapped himself together in a rough way with long strips of his shirt, which was almost in rags from his scrambles up and down the slope. Cadoual had no further need for clothing, so Alain took his things to replenish his own depleted wardrobe.

As he anticipated, the storm burst again with redoubled fury, and for two days and nights the cavern was filled with the clamour of the labouring rocks. The great red organ pipes, near which he lay, hummed each its own particular note, which rose and fell with the sobbing of the storm through the sea-cave, and the wild medley that filled the air set his brain throbbing till his head seemed like to burst.

More than once he groped his way to his loop-hole, in spite of bruises and wrenches to the wounded shoulder. But the Light stood stark and lonely, the gallery had no occupant, and all he could see was the low, grey sky, and the wild waste of slate-grey waves racing furiously for the rocks. More than once he breasted and drifted with the rush of air through the funnel to the sink, and sat and watched the tumult down below, anxious now for calm weather so that he might see if perchance salvation lay that way.

When he passed the old camping-ground on the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

second day, on his way to his lookout, he stopped short and rubbed his eyes. Even in this short time his sight had tuned itself somewhat to the twilight of the cavern. But now surely his eyes had played him false, and he groped forward in amazement, and felt all round with his hands to make sure.

But it was no trick of his eyes. Cadoual's body was gone, and he could see no sign of it anywhere about.

He leaned up against the rock, panting. The man was surely dead. He was cold and stiff the last time he saw him; but his body was no longer there. There was the couch he had lain on. There were the remains of the fire, and the egg-shells scattered about. No, there was no mistake; and Alain leaned there gazing with wide, startled eyes at the place where Cadoual ought to have been, but was not.

The superstitions of his race sprang up in him full blown, and flapped their wings about his brain till he grew sick with apprehension. Either Cadoual had come to life again, or the Evil One had come and taken him away. Since he was absolutely certain that Cadoual was dead, *why—nom-de-Dieu!*—it must be the devil; and Alain, with no practical belief in the efficacy of the charm, still crossed himself devoutly as the only possible protection from the powers of darkness.

CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

When he got over the shock of it he went his way warily, lest the Evil One should be lying in wait for him too round some dark corner; and when he got back to his fire he piled the fuel high, and sat quaking by it for the rest of the day.

When he fell asleep at night he woke with a start lest his fire should have gone out; though why fire should be any protection against the devil might have been beyond his powers of explanation.

Once when he woke thus in the middle of the night he got an impression of stealthy movement out in the darkness beyond, and it set him shivering. He lay grimping to his couch, and listened with every nerve that was in him. The storm had ceased; the rock-voices were dumb once more; the silence of death reigned through all the pillared aisles. When he cautiously fed his fire the flames set shadowy goblins flitting about behind the organ pipes. It was a situation to try even nerves that had known no shocks.

Surely something moved out beyond there. He sweated cold terrors, and lay low, with bristling hair and creeping back. He dared not sleep, and the night passed slowly, full of vague fears.

When at last the far-away corner buttress stole silently out of the surrounding darkness and showed faintly against the glimmering twilight behind, he knew that it was day. He breathed a sigh of relief, for the day was not quite as the night, even in

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

that dismal hole, and the night holds terrors when even the day holds no great joys.

He fed his fire and started off after a further supply of food and fuel. It was very dark in there, but by this time he could find his way in spite of that. He came to the cleft in the organ pipes, and climbed through, with wide side glances for any suspicious flitter among the shadows. Instead of coming down on the rock, his bare foot lighted on something soft and clammy cold. His flesh retracted instinctively and he rolled over headlong. His hand touched the thing that lay there, and in a moment he was up and away among the pillars, gasping with horror, sick with fear. For the thing he had fallen over was Cadoual's body, or he was mad.

Instinct would have led him to his lair; but that awful thing lay between. He fled straight on as he rose from the ground, and never stopped nor cast a look behind till he had scaled the steep side-wall and lay in the doves' nest, with his heart going like a pump and his brain cracking with amazement and horror.

It could not be—and yet it was. He had felt it, and he knew. It was long before he found courage even to lift his head and peep fearfully into the cave below. As for going down—so crazy a thought never entered his head.

It took two full days and nights of close retire-

CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

ment, the absorption of many eggs—which fortunately served for drink as well as meat—and the absolute absence of the slightest sign or sound below, to string his jangled nerves to something like their usual level.

Then, with infinite caution, and every sense on end with apprehension, he stole down, and crept foot by foot through the pillared hall. He had succeeded in half-convincing himself that his imagination had played him a scurvy trick. He had come to doubt the actual existence of the thing he had felt. He had nerved himself to go and see.

Foot by foot he made his way, with many a cautious halt, prepared for instant flight at every step. He found that even two days' continuous stay in the lighter cavern had sufficed to affect in some degree the adjustment of his eyes to the dark. He strained them till they shot with sparks, but saw nothing.

So he came at last to the gap in the screen, and there was nothing there, nor had he seen or heard any suspicious thing. He climbed quickly through and groped to his camp. He gathered a handful of his bedding and lit it, with a quick all-round glance as the flame leaped out. But there was nothing abnormal in sight. His couch, indeed, was scattered, and so were the thin white ashes of his fires; but the disturbances of the last night he passed there were sufficient to account for these things.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

He had brought a supply of food with him, so he set to and plucked and cooked a pigeon. The smell of it was very grateful to him, and did more than anything else to dissipate the remnants of his fears.

By the time he had picked the last bone he was satisfied that the terrors of that other night had suggested to him things that were not, and he started eagerly for the sea-cave to see what it looked like in its ordinary condition, and whether there was any possibility of escape that way.

The water lapped musically on the rough sides of the basin, against which it had churned with such fury the last time he saw it. The whispers ran up into the roof and hummed there till it buzzed like a hive. The place was filled with the gentle murmurings, and with a strange wan light that came glimmering up from the water. It was a dim green light, full of breaks and flutterings, and it came from the farther end of the pool. He crept down the incline to the edge of the water and sat down to consider it.

Away in front there, where the light was strongest, there must be an opening to the sea. But from the look of it the tunnel was very far down, and from the dimness of the light the arch must be a thick one. Could he get through by diving? It seemed more than doubtful. He had no means of judging the distance between the pool and the sea, and the attempt to find out might cost him his life.

CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

When his eyes grew more accustomed to the shifting glimmer, he saw shadows gliding to and fro across the disc which he took to be the inner mouth of the tunnel; and presently he made out waving fronds and filaments of seaweed in such masses at times that the light was almost obscured.

He sat there the greater part of the day, dabbling his feet in the free sea-water, in hopes that the ebb-tide might bring the mouth of the tunnel nearer to him; but it never got close enough to give him any ideas concerning it worth risking his life upon.

He would have gone down into the water at once for a closer investigation, but the wound in his shoulder had opened with his late exertions, and healing lay in quiet.

He had counted so much on the sea-cave leading to freedom that the disappointment depressed him exceedingly. There were those other archways and cross-tunnels, however, and any one of them might be the one he wanted. So the following day he began a systematic search, and it kept him very fully occupied, which made for mental balance.

Of his labours in the transport of fuel for flares, of his precarious gropings in the dark, of all he saw down there of the stupendous works wrought by Nature and the untold ages, I have no space here to tell. I have heard him try to describe them, and at such times his blue eyes had a fixed and far-away look in them, and words failed him,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and his summing up of the whole was usually a quiet, reminiscent "*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" which, while lacking in descriptive detail, told us more than many words. Descriptive detail, you see, was not Alain Carbonec's strong point. But the things that actually happened to himself had wrought themselves into his very soul, and could never be effaced; and, no matter how rough their telling, no man could hear them from his lips without feeling that he believed every word he spoke.

He seached in turn every opening out of the great cave, and found no hope in any of them, and his spirits sank very low. At the farther end, far away past the red organ pipes, the cave opened through narrow tunnels into other caves, and these again into others; and so he might have wandered for days, but dared not, lest he should never get back.

In the farthest chamber he ever reached, where the pillars and curtains and tendrils of rock were all as green as the water in the sea-cave, and the silence was so crushing that he averred he could hear the rocks growing, he came on an object that sent him home to his fire and tied him there for two days.

In the farthest corner of that far cave he came on the body of a man, sunk down on its knees and sitting on its heels, chin on chest, hands in lap, in the attitude of utter despair and concomitant



CONCERNING STRANGE MATTERS

prayer. It was so coated with green stone, like everything else thereabouts, that it might easily have passed as one more stone among many. But something about it drew his attention, and he examined it carefully, and even wasted a precious match on it and an extra flare, and he says it had been a man. It had doubtless been there for ages, from the times before those huge red organ pipes grew together in the great cave. Alain viewed it with awe, and took its moral to heart. He went back quickly, and for days thereafter never strayed beyond the sight of his fire or the light of the outer cave.

CHAPTER XVII

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

EACH day, as soon as he rose—and some nights he got but little sleep, as you will see—Alain went first to his lookout for a sight of Barbe; and if he was in time and in luck he would see her come out on to the gallery, and stand gazing towards Cap Réhel. He knew that it was of him she was thinking; that it was for him she was looking, and doubtless praying.

He was not a religious man, and that perhaps was not his fault. At religion, as taught by the priests, he had scoffed with his fellows, and held the “crows” in as small esteem as they did; but as his hopes and spirits sank he “became very religious,” as I have heard him say in his simple way. “I think I prayed most of the time, and came to do it at last without knowing, because I had very great fear.”

It was the sight of Barbe started his prayers each day; for as soon as he saw her he cried, “The good God have pity on us!” And if he did not see her he prayed it just the same.

In spite of the conviction he had forced himself

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

into that the unpleasant return of Cadoual's body was not a reality but the result of a general "slackening of the ropes," there remained with him a constant feeling of discomfort, which he tried in vain to throw off. However hard he might work during the day, his rest at night was broken by dreams from which he awoke in shivering terrors, by sounds which ceased when he listened for them, by the feeling of proximity to some horror for which he could not account and of which he could not get rid. Fear clung to him even when he awoke; and, as he put it, "I went with my chin over both shoulders."

One night, after a better sleep than usual, Alain awoke in a cold sweat and found his fire nearly burned out. He was gathering a handful of his bedding to brighten it, when a sound in the darkness froze him to the marrow, and he lay listening with his hand outstretched. "It seemed to me that Death was creeping past me, and was very long of passing." I give you his own words, for I cannot improve on them.

He said the air smelt cold and damp, and he shook so that he slipped the hand nearest his mouth between his teeth to keep them from rattling, and it bore the marks for weeks. Out there, in the dark, something went slowly past him—very slowly, almost without noise—and he lay biting his hand and shaking with fear.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

He slept no more that night, and as soon as the outer cave glimmered with the dawn he got up to go and bid Barbe good-morning. As he drew near to the gap in the red organ pipes all the accumulated terrors of the past gripped him by the back and wrung the life and reason nearly out of him; for, crossways against the opening, just above the lower unbroken cone, was Cadoual's body trying hard to get through. If it had come right side up, head in air and feet to earth, it could have passed through without difficulty. But the sight of it suspended in the air and straining against the bars in that ghostly fashion was too much for Alain.

He was at first too stricken to move. He stood, with loose jaw and fixed eyes, and looked at the awful thing.

Then the hanging pipes against which it strained snapped suddenly up above with a ringing crack, the pipes came down with a crash, and as the echoes bellowed out Cadoual's body came swiftly through about a yard from the ground, and Alain fell, and remembered nothing more.

When he came to himself he was lying where he had fallen, and nothing had touched him. He crawled back to the fire and piled on fuel, and sat there all day, eating nothing, thinking nothing except that his mind had given way at last, which was fairly good proof that it had not.

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

Once only did he get up, and that was to go and examine the red pipes, in a half-dazed, doubtful way, to see if they were really broken. There was no doubt about their being broken. He went back to the fire and tried to untie the knots in his brain; but the task was beyond him. At last he got up heavily and lighted a sheaf of fuel; then, swinging it before him to keep off the devil, he went through the opening in the pipes, and, with never a glance through his lookout, climbed the side-wall and lay down in the doves' chamber. He was quite sure now that his brain had gone, and was not a little surprised that he felt so little different from what he always had done.

On the third day, having seen nothing, heard nothing, smelt nothing but rock-doves in all that time, Alain slid down the slope and crept through the pillars to the sea-cave, determined to make his way out through the tunnel or die in the attempt. He stripped and plunged in, and the water braced him like a tonic. Then, noting exactly where he wanted to go, he clambered up the rock-wall and dived for the wavering disc below.

Through his half-closed eyes, as he came opposite the light, he looked down the tunnel and saw the brighter gleam of the depths of sunlit water outside; but it seemed a great way off, and he doubted if any human lungs could outlast the passage. Furthermore, there seemed some ob-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

struction in the tunnel between him and the outer light; but what it was he could not make out in the short time he could wait down there. He came up and sat blowing and coughing till his wind came back, and then plunged for the disc once more.

There *was* something in the passage, and the impression Alain got of it was of an immense red cabbage rooted to the rock, with a base as wide as a table-top, and strange, shadowy arms which swung to and fro with the pulse of the water. He had never in his life seen anything like it, and there was something strangely menacing about it; but it never for one moment occurred to him that such a thing might be actively hostile.

Presently he dived again, and as he came opposite the tunnel some colder thing than the water lapped softly round his body. He took it for a frond of seaweed, and as he tore at it with his hands a slight shock went tingling through his hand and body. He felt himself being drawn gently towards the tunnel, and through his narrowed lids he saw a dozen of those strange, red bulbous arms stealing towards him. Another thin, slimy cord coiled softly round his legs, and thrilled him with prickling shocks. He kicked and tore in desperation, and, feeling the rock wall of the tunnel-mouth under his feet, doubled himself for one great effort, and shot up to the surface. He crawled to a ledge and lay there while the water ran out of him, and

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

breath came slowly back, and he felt grateful for life, though he scarcely knew why.

He was still lying there when there came a rustling of the pool below, he heard a long-drawn rustle up the rocky slope which led to the great cave, and there passed before his startled eyes a sinuous monster whose length he could not determine, but which seemed to him endless.

The light was very dim; the pool itself was brighter than the void above, since all the light there was came through it. The end of the monster was still in the tunnel leading from the sea when the front of it had passed out of sight up the passage leading to the great cave. It moved in long undulations, and the swiftness of its oncoming took it up the slope without a pause. Alain flattened himself to his ledge and tried not to breathe, lest it should turn and rend him. What it was he knew not, but he believed it was in very truth the devil, and he had no slightest desire to follow it into the cave.

He lay on his ledge all night, naked and shivering, not daring to move a limb lest the monster should be silently watching him.

The pool below rose to its fullest and sank to its lowest, and the light faded out of it and left it all a black welter of gurgles and cluckings. He dared not close his eyes, but lay there watching and waiting.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Once during the night the pool glowed sudden fire, which broke against the rocky walls till the place looked like a mighty cauldron, and he lay sick with fear lest the Thing should choose that time to return.

The wan green light stole back into the pool at last, and he knew that it was morning. Outside, the Light was gleaming in the early sunshine, and Barbe would be in the gallery watching the coming of the day and thinking of him who came not in spite of all her prayers. And chilled to the marrow, he lay on his narrow ledge and waited the return of the devil.

Since all things come to him who waits, that came at last for which Alain waited in fear and trembling.

He heard a sound of movement in the passage, and in the fluttering light he saw once more the body of George Cadoual. It came swiftly along, waist-high as before, head and feet drooping slightly to the ground, and he saw that the monster held it round the waist, with huge fat lips pouting above and below. He had no time to notice more before it glided into the pool, and went through the tunnel with a rush that sent the water splashing up the sides of the cave. Then Alain drew his cramped limbs together, grabbed his clothes and fled to his chamber of refuge among the doves.

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

He was in a strange state of mind, wrung with physical terror, yet to some extent mentally relieved. Cadoual was explained at all events. What this awful Thing might be he could not imagine. It seemed to belong to this world; but it was monstrous beyond belief, and he shook at thought of it.

He dressed himself, for he was very cold, and instinct sent his hand here and there in search of eggs and conveyed them to his mouth. Then he lay all the rest of that day, with his head overhanging the gulf, on the watch for the devil.

Let us get done with this. I am almost as sick of this loathly beast as Alain Carbonec was himself.

He lay in the roost all day, and saw no sign of it; and that night, too, passed without disturbance. It was the afternoon of the third day before anything occurred to trouble him, and he declares that during these days and nights he never slept a wink—which, indeed, is likely enough.

Towards sunset he saw the monster coming, and from his eyrie gazed down upon it, fascinated with horror, and by no means sure of his own safety. It moved slowly along the level at the bottom of the slope, its front erected slightly, nosing curiously to and fro as it came. Head, as distinct from body, there seemed to be none. The body was about as thick as that of a man, and in length indeterminate,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

since it contracted and expanded in its progression with extraordinary suppleness. At times it seemed no thicker than the upper part of a man's leg, and then, as the bulk drew up for another slow forward stretch, it swelled prodigiously and grew tense with the working of the mighty muscles inside, and the skin, smooth and swollen, gleamed iridescent.

It was very terrible to look upon, quite apart from any powers of evil it might possess. In describing it Alain Carbonec used the word *ver-de-diable* (devil-worm), and that designation was doubtless accurate enough. Head, as I have said, there was apparently none. The Thing ended in front—to put it in Alain's own words—as it probably ended in the rear, in a simple rounding off of the body. The other end of it he could not see, and in fact he never did see the whole of the monster at once.

It nosed about among the fuel which lay there, and presently he saw the blunt front of it press down among the rubbish, and then come up with a broken rock pinnacle, which it circled round the middle with two great folds of its front skin like two pouting lips. It carried this with it playfully, as it had carried Cadoual's body; and then the great blunt snout, still brandishing its toy, came rambling vaguely up the slope, and Alain watched its progress in mortal terror.

The sun just then shot in its long golden bar

THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL

through the loophole; and as the beast swung its head slowly to and fro it passed through the bar of light. The monster dropped as if struck, and the rock it carried went clattering down the slope. For a time it lay still; then the light died out and it came nosing up the slope again.

Alain was sure it was after him, and his extremity sharpened his wits. It had ducked at the thrust of the light. It might be that it had eyes, though he could not see any. It might be that light was obnoxious to it. It might be that the fires he had kept up in the cave had been his salvation.

The beast came on, as leisurely as if it knew he was there, and could not escape. It drew up the slope with easy undulations indicative of tremendous muscular power. It was coming.

He frantically raked together an armful of nests, regardless of the complaints of the occupants. He held the bundle on the slope in front of him and drew out Cadoual's box of matches. As the mass burst into flame he rolled it down on the menacing brown head below.

The Thing dropped instantly, with the flames all about it. The scattered stuff below caught fire, too, and Alain flung down more to help it as fast as he could gather and fling. The great worm writhed in silent agony, then, with a mighty heave, the head went sweeping back over the body, and it disappeared like a shadow into the great cave.

CHAPTER XVIII

ONE RETURNS

WHEN Barbe came out into the gallery in the early dawn one morning her eye fell at once on something floating in the Pot. So familiar was she with all her surroundings that no smallest thing out of the common could escape her notice.

She stood gazing at that white thing circling slowly round and round in the broken water, now gliding quietly, now jerking abruptly and spinning and darting, the sport of the waves.

It was too far away to see with any exactness; but she knew it was a body, and her heart beat slow, and a sick fear came over her at the thought that it might be Alain come back to her in this way, even as he had come the first time.

She went slowly down the ladder to her father, who had just turned in.

"There is a man in the Pot," she said abruptly.

"*Eh b'en!*" said Pierre. "Let him stop there."

"But—" and she stopped short. To hint at the possibility of it being Alain Carbonec was not the way to enlist Pierre's sympathies.

ONE RETURNS

"I want no more men out of the Pot."

Barbe flushed at the implication. "It might be—one of them," she said hesitatingly.

"You'd better go and see;" and Pierre lurched over with his face to the wall as an intimation that the interview was ended.

Yes, truly, she would go and see. The very worst could be no worse than she had come to believe, and if that was Alain's body washing about in the Pot, she would be more content to have him resting quietly in the ground. So she slowly let down the boat from its beams, securing one rope while she slacked the other, till it dipped and rode. Then she threw in her casting-rope, made after a pattern all her own—a long, thin line raying at the end into four short rope-arms, each weighted with a ball of lead—a combination of lasso and bolas which she had found extremely useful. Many a prize had she fished out of the Pot with it, and not a few bodies. There were certain positions, however, which she could not reach even with this long arm, and in these the flotsam would swing round and round for days, till the hidden forces sucked it down and in due time delivered it on Plenevec beach.

Barbe pulled to the inner lip of the Pot, for the tide was nearly at the flood. Then she stood up to watch for the bobbing white thing to come round to her. It was dawdling playfully round the pool,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

now darting forward as though endowed with sudden intention, then wandering off on a side issue, then twisted suddenly backward on some hidden coil of the water; and Barbe stood gently working her oars and gazing at it with the fixed intensity of a mother eagle.

Suddenly her face relaxed and a sigh of relief escaped her. Some sudden upheaval of the water had turned the body completely over so that now it lay face downwards, and she saw that it had black hair, and her heart was glad. At all events it was not the body of Alain Carbonec.

She waited till it came round to her side of the Pot, then stood and flung her line, missed twice, and the third time captured it and held it anchored against the slow flow of the current. She had to wait till the tide was at its highest before she could draw the body gently in at the end of her line. She bent over it, not without emotion, in spite of the practice she had had. A drowned man always made her heart ache; but now the rebound from her fears, and the renewed possibilities of hope, faint though the hope might be, made her almost indifferent to this stranger. So she bent and looped the line round the flaccid feet and turned her boat towards Plenevec.

"*Tiens!*" said one of the loungers among the boats on the beach as Barbe drew into sight,—
"La Carcassone who arrives."

ONE RETURNS

"The old man must be ill," said another; "or maybe she wants news of Alain, and the old curmudgeon won't speak."

"If he told all he knew—" said a third. "*Par-dieu!* it is a wise man that can hold his tongue."

"Or a guilty one."

"That's so."

"Tschut!" from an ampler-minded one. "Unless you make out that he killed them both you have no right to say so. If it had been only one, and that one Alain Carbonec, I'd say yes with you; but why the old hunks should kill them both I cannot see. More likely one of them has killed the other on account of this girl, and then bolted."

"If that's so, I bet you it wasn't Alain did the killing."

"It wasn't like him if he did, anyway. *Voyons!* here comes M. Gaudriol."

Then they caught a glimpse of what Barbe had in tow, and moved down in a body to meet her.

"What hast thou there, little one?" cried Gaudriol when she came within hail.

But Barbe pulled steadily ashore before she answered, and then she said simply, "A body out of the Pot."

Gaudriol's official heart began to beat more quickly, for the chances were, since there had been no wreck, that light was come at last on the mys-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

tery that had been troubling them all. It could not be Alain's body, or Barbe would not have answered him so quietly. If Cadoual's—then—truly, yes, his fears would be no less for Alain, but they would be of a different sort.

"*Voyons!*" he said softly, lest his voice should tell his fears. "Let us see."

They drew the body carefully ashore, and all crowded round, and then fell back as it was turned over, for it was a very ghastly sight. Bruised and broken, with a stab in the throat, and every evidence of brutal maltreatment, no more crying witness to a horrible crime ever took the stand than that silent figure lying on the shingle.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" murmured the Sergeant. "It is he—Cadoual."

"He has been murdered," said one.

"Smashed all to pieces," said another.

"*Mais, mon Dieu!* it is brutality beyond belief;" and they talked among themselves and looked askance at Barbe.

"Did you know who it was, *ma fille?*" asked Gaudriol.

"No," she said. "I saw him from the gallery. But my—M. Carcassone would not go"—the bystanders growled meaningly—"so I went myself, and drew him out with the line. I feared it might be Alain."

Gaudriol would almost have preferred that it

ONE RETURNS

had been Alain; but then there is a vast difference between liking and love.

Half the village was gathered round the body, when the crowd was suddenly parted by Madame Cadoual, who came down on it and through it like a black fury. Her face was very white against her coarse black hair, which had broken loose in her passage; her eyes were ablaze with passion.

"They say—" she began, at sight of M. Gaudriol, and then she saw the body on the stones, and she went quickly to it and fell on her knees beside it. "George! my son, my son! Dost thou come back to me like this? Tell me, then, who has done this to thee?" and she bent her ear to the sodden, white lips. "It is that cursed old murderer at the Light," she cried, springing up with a scream which sent the crowd flying back from her. "Oh! but his head shall fall for this, and that wretched girl who tempted thee across there! They shall pay for this. Life for life, and blood for blood! And may their souls—" And she proceeded to curse them with all the vehemence of her outraged motherhood, and Barbe shivered and went pale.

"*Tiens!* it is she!" cried the tigress, as some instinct told her that the stranger girl with the uncoifed hair and the beautiful face, though it was pale and sad enough just now, must be the girl from the Light, the girl who had stolen her son's heart from her, and she launched herself at Barbe.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Gaudriol had foreseen it, and stepped between them just in time. He took the frantic woman by the shoulders and held her, while she struggled fiercely, and her working mouth volleyed curses past him.

"Be quiet!" he said, shaking her. "You don't know what you are saying. The girl has nothing to do with it."

"Blood for blood!" shrieked the mother. "Their lives for his, and everlasting torment for their souls!"

"Take her home," said Gaudriol to the bystanders. "She is going out of her mind. And carry him"—with a nod towards the body—"home, too. For you, *ma fille*, I will take you back to the Light. Jan Godey, we will take your boat and tow the other;" and in two minutes they were under way.

At sight of them going Madame Cadoual broke from her guardians and came rushing down the shingle. She dashed into the water, and hurled curses after them with voice and hands and eyes and every fibre of her being.

"Don't look at her," said Gaudriol to Barbe. "She is mad."

He was very silent after that, preparing traps for Pierre, till they bumped against the iron ladder.

"He will be sleeping," said Barbe as she joined Gaudriol in the doorway.

ONE RETURNS

"*Bien!*" said he, as once before; "I like them sleeping," and once more he laid his hand on the sleeping man's shoulder in hopes of trapping the guilt in his eyes as he woke.

"*Comment donc?*" cried Pierre, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "You again, M. Gaudriol? I thought——"

"George Cadoual has come home, *mon beau,*" said the Sergeant.

"Ah!" snorted Pierre, "then you are satisfied I didn't kill that one at all events."

"Unfortunately he is dead."

"How—dead—and come home? What do you mean?" and the old man stiffened suddenly.

"He has been killed—brutally killed. Every bone in his body is broken, and his throat cut."

"*Mon Dieu!*" and he gazed back at Gaudriol defiantly, and yet visibly wondering. "And how did he come back, then?"

"Your daughter brought him. He was in the Pot."

"*Tiens!* I remember. She asked me to go, but I wanted no more men out of the Pot." He was silent for a moment, turning the news over in his mind. Then he looked up at Gaudriol, and asked suddenly, "And the other?"

"There is no news of him," said the Sergeant, with a shake of the head.

"*Voyons, donc!*" said Pierre musingly, after

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

more thought. "Go away, Barbe. I must speak with M. Gaudriol."

"No, I shall not go. You are going to speak against Alain," said Barbe, with her face very pale and her fists tightly clenched.

"*Eh b'en*, it is all one!" Then to the Sergeant, "You think I have had a finger in all this, M. Gaudriol; but you are wrong. I know nothing about it except this: George Cadoual went away to Plougastel. He discovered there that Alain Carbonec was in reality Alain Kervec, son of that man I killed here for his sins eighteen years ago." He spoke steadily, but the cords stood out in his forehead. "Now, if Alain learned that it was Cadoual who told me that—why, *voyez-vous*, that may explain some things."

Gaudriol feared it might; but he was not going to let Pierre see it.

"And you told Alain it was Cadoual who gave you that information when he came back that day—was it not so?" he asked quietly.

"I did not see him, so I could not tell him. How many more times must I tell you that? *Nom-de-Dieu!*"—began Pierre, with a touch of anger, and then brought himself to with a round turn and relapsed into sulky silence.

Gaudriol was satisfied in his own mind, from what he had seen, that Pierre had nothing to do with Cadoual's death. He turned and left the

ONE RETURNS

room, followed by Barbe. The mystery was beyond him, and he was full of angry perplexity. For now that a body had turned up, and beyond all doubt a body that pointed to murder, something had got to be done; but what he did not know. If it had been Alain's body, now, he would have arrested Pierre on the spot; but he could see no adequate reason why Pierre should have killed Cadoual, unless, indeed, he had gone out of his mind and killed for the sake of killing, or for the purpose of keeping Barbe free.

"You do not doubt Alain, monsieur?" asked Barbe piteously as they stood at the top of the iron ladder. "Alain could not do any such thing."

"I will not believe it, my child," he said kindly. "At present I cannot understand it. We must hope for the best."

But there was not very much hope in him as Jan Godey's boat swung back to Plenevec. He feared greatly for Alain, and now his fear was not that he was dead.

Thereafter Barbe spent much time in the gallery, and watched the Pot as a starving eagle eyes the plains.

CHAPTER XIX

A BID FOR LIFE

TWO whole days Alain roosted among the doves and watched for the reappearance of the enemy. Then, as there had been no slightest sign of him during all that time, he crept cautiously down and ventured into the great cave, carrying with him an armful of dry nests and a match ready to fire them at a moment's notice. His flesh crinkled at the thought of the horrible Thing, and he went wide-eyed and stopped every few steps to listen; but the silence lay heavy, and struck him with a new feeling of oppression after the multitudinous murmurings and family squabblings of the chambered doves.

With one eye on the arch that led down to the water cave, and in momentary fear of seeing that awful black snout issue from it, he made a cursory inspection of the nearer parts of the cave, and saw nothing to excite his fears. He got a drink at the pool and clambered up to his lookout, but saw no sign of Barbe. Then he went up into his nest again, and slept that night in spite of the overpow-

A BID FOR LIFE

ering smell and the restless flutterings of his bed-fellows.

Next morning he was at the lookout by dawn, and was cheered by the sight of Barbe in the gallery. He saw her quit it suddenly, and presently she came to the doorway, lowered the boat, and rowed away as though she were coming to fetch him. She had gone after Cadoual's body in the Pot; but he could not follow her so far. She did not return, and he went on about his business.

Bit by bit during the next three days he satisfied himself that he was the only occupant of the cave, and at last gained confidence enough to relight his fire. By way of protection he collected an immense pile of fuel and lay each night behind it. He had so far kept clear of the sea cave. His experiences there were still too fresh in his memory, and the possibility of meeting that terrible Thing face to face in the narrow passage held him back.

Then courage grew with immunity. By way of occupation while he lay in hiding, he had fashioned some fish-hooks out of pigeons' breast-bones, with no very definite intention of using them, indeed, but because he could not lie absolutely still and do nothing. Bones were the only things he could employ his knife on, and fish-hooks suggested themselves most naturally to him. He thought now of the fish in the pool, and determined to add some to his limited faring. Hooks he had; line he made by

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

unreaving some of Cadoual's jersey and twisting it into a thin, tight cord. He took some scraps of pigeon-flesh for bait, and an armful of fuel for protection, and went cautiously down the passage to the sea.

Nothing disturbed him on the road, and he was soon sitting in the dim green glimmer, baiting his hooks and wondering why the cave seemed darker than usual, when the sun, he knew, was shining brightly outside. He cast a couple of lines, and sat with one in each hand waiting for the twitch that should tell him the bait had been swallowed. The twitch came instantly almost, and he smelt broiled fish and his mouth watered. In five minutes he had fish enough for a couple of days: alose weighing two to three pounds—a fish somewhat akin to the shad.

As he sat watching the slant of his lines in the glimmering water he became aware of something down below which had not been there before, a darker band of shadow which ran nearly the length of the pool. It seemed to stream out of the tunnel that led to the sea, and swung gently to and fro. He peered and pondered over this for a long time, but could make nothing of it in the shifting light.

His mind was still occupied with it when he returned to the great cave and broiled his fish and dallied over the novel enjoyment of it, but all the

A BID FOR LIFE

time kept a watchful eye on that dark archway that led to the sea. And out of his much thinking a strange possibility evolved itself sometime in the night, and as soon as he had bidden Barbe good-morning he hastened back to the sea cave to put his idea to the test.

For a long time he sat and watched the dark, waving shadow; and then, as it grew in consistency with the growing light and showed no signs of moving, he screwed himself to the point of going down to see if it was what he thought it might be.

With a vivid recollection of the unpleasantnesses of his last dip in the pool, he would have preferred some other way of satisfying his curiosity. But there was no other way, so he slowly peeled, and at last went in with a plunge, but well away from the tunnel and those clammy, long-reaching arms which had embraced him before.

His groping hands slithered along the shadow, and sent colder chills up his spine than any the water of the pool could produce. So far his idea was correct. The waving shadow was the body of the monster that had terrified him so. It swung to the ceaseless movement of the pool. It had not moved since first he saw it. It was evidently dead; and, in spite of his creeping spine and polluted fingers, he felt suddenly more his own man again.

Once assured that the Thing was dead, the desire to know how it died followed naturally. By de-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

grees he ventured nearer and nearer to the tunnel out of which the long dark body projected, and so at last saw a very strange sight through his glimmering lids.

The great sinuous body was held firmly in the middle by the enfolding of those transparent red arms which had almost drawn him into the tunnel the first day he went into the water. Myriads of them seemed clasped round the long dark body, and so tightly was it gripped and such a mass of flabby tentacles had gathered over it that the victim seemed to be embedded in the centre of its destroyer. One or two of the diaphanous arms waved above the thick red mass below, like look-outs on the watch, and to the startled investigator of this strange sea tragedy it was amazing that things so apparently wanting in solidity should have been able to accomplish so much. But the monster was dead, and his life was freed from its terrors, and he walked back into the great cave with a spring in his step and his thoughts already busy with other matters.

Now that the monster was dead and he could go without fear, his mind set itself strenuously to the work of getting out of prison. Outlet on the ground floor, so to speak, he did not believe existed, and he had given up all hope of finding. Apparently the only other man who had penetrated into the cave had died in hopeless despair with his face

A BID FOR LIFE

to the blank wall of that far inner chamber. He doubted if it would be possible for him to get out himself without assistance from the outside, and his brain wearied itself with impossible plans for attracting attention to his plight.

The only communication he could hold with the world was through that narrow slit which gave him daily sight of Barbe, a sight for which he never ceased to thank God, though he did it unconsciously and not in words. And even the inner opening of that slit he had not been able to approach, by reason of the arching of the cavern wall thereabouts. He had been able to look through it only at a distance and from the opposite slope. The other window, through which the sun shot his last rays each night, was high above his head, sixty or seventy mètres at least he reckoned—say nearly two hundred feet—and below it also the granite walls fell away, so that nothing but a fly could have crawled up them.

Even if he reached the inner end of his lookout shaft, the problem of communication would still confront him. But, like a wise man, he tackled the business nearest to his hand, and let his brains go puzzling after the rest. Meanwhile he was grateful for life and the releasing of his soul from the terrors that had made it weaker than water. He had food in abundance, and the inexpressible comfort of fire; and above all he had the daily sight of

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Barbe to kindle his courage and keep him from despair.

To build a platform twenty feet high up to the cleft was Alain's first task. That involved labour but no great difficulties. The great red organ pipes furnished his platform and the first steps back to life and Barbe. He sacrificed them ruthlessly. For days the great cave clanged with the echoes of their fall. More than once they came near breaking his head as he pulled and ran. Then, learning by experience, he made a rope of twisted garments, his own and Cadoual's; and by attaching this to the mighty pendicles and hauling from a distance he managed to secure them without danger to his life.

More than once, when lying by his fire, he had heard a solemn *plunk, plunk*, in the pool behind the pipes. He had said to himself that there were fish there, and promised himself some. Through the crash of the first pillar he heard a sudden swish of falling rain behind him, and turned in time to see the firelit surface of the pool thrashed with a storm of drops from above, which the noise had shaken down. It was many days before the same thing happened again, and the *plunk, plunk* also ceased. Nevertheless, having conceived a quite understandable dislike for fish from the sea cave, he set his lines in the pool, and succeeded in catching some little creatures, almost transparent and so strangely shaped that he was not quite sure whether they

A BID FOR LIFE

were fish at all. He cooked them, however, and found them first-rate eating, and after that he took them regularly.

It took a week's hard labour to break and carry into the outer cave as many organ pipes as he thought he would need, and another full week to pile them crosswise like a child's castle of bricks, and to wedge them securely with broken pieces, so that he could run up and down without fear of a general collapse. But on the fourteenth day he was peering through the hole, with his head in the inner side of it, and Barbe seemed somewhat nearer to him than she had been before.

He had been close upon five weeks in the cave, though he had lost any exact account of the time, and only now were the first steps accomplished towards his liberation.

The further problem of signalling through his hole had still to be solved, and he knew all the difficulties. The face of the cliff looked seaward, and not once in a year did any of the Plenevec men frequent it, for they took neither the birds nor their eggs. Anything he pushed through the hole might lie unseen on the rocks below for all time, if it did not fall into the sea and get washed away, or into some ledge to become a nest for the clustering sea-fowl; and how thickly they swarmed on the face of the cliff the constant eclipse of his lookout showed. They were thicker than bees in a hive

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

—kittiwakes, guillemots, and great croaking cormorants—and how to get a message through them was now the great puzzle of his life.

He could not make a flag of his clothes and push it through, because he had no pole, nor anything remotely resembling one. At last, after days and nights of anxious deliberation, he hit on an idea which seemed to offer possibilities.

He wanted a rope long enough to hang down the face of the cliff, with something at the end to attract attention, and, if he could manage it, some message explaining his position. But he had not so much as a piece of string in his possession, and if he tore up every rag he had it would not be enough. He thought it all out, and prepared first his message and its accompanying indicator.

The message Alain scratched or painted on a square piece of Cadoual's shirt by means of pigeon's quills and pigeons' blood. That was easy, though it took some time. It told where he was, and suggested relief by the letting down of a man from the cliff-top to the upper window of the cave; then a rope let down inside, and he would be free. This he made up carefully into a small packet, weighted with a piece of rock, and tied with strips from his blue cotton blouse. Then he took the cotton blouse and ripped at it till the back alone was left, forming a flag roughly three feet long by two feet broad.

A BID FOR LIFE

The message he tied to one corner of the flag and laid it in the shaft of the lookout ready for the rope, and then proceeded to make the rope—surely as odd a rope as ever was made.

The only things the cave afforded in unlimited quantity, besides water and air, were rock-doves. His rope, therefore, was to be made of rock-doves. He nipped their soft necks and brought the plump little bodies down into the cave a score at a time. He prepared from the remains of his blue cottons a large quantity of strips to tie them with, and proceeded to attach the upper end of his flag, at the bottom of which was the message, to the neck of the first dove's body. Its feet he tied to the neck of the next one, and so on till out of his twenty doves he had a rope something like a kite's tail nearly fifteen feet long. The rest was only a matter of continuance.

When the rope of rock-doves was thirty feet long he arranged the procession carefully on the ledge of his lookout, and slowly and cautiously, and only after several failures—for the rock-doves were soft, and would persist in doubling up into a heap—he succeeded in pushing the message through the hole in the face of the cliff. It knocked over a matronly little guillemot which was roosting there, and she flew off with a surprised grunt, and followed it down the cliff under the impression that she had laid an unusually fine specimen of an

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

egg, possessed of unheard-of powers of locomotion.

His great fear was that, after all, his work would be useless by reason of the clouds of sea-birds preventing his flags from being seen. He strung a blue pennant at the end of every twenty birds, and laid a stone on the floor to keep tally; and when there were ten stones on the floor, and two hundred rock-doves had been worked into the rope, he stopped and anchored it to his platform, as it had been anchored in sections every night.

This work, and the possibility of something resulting from it, kept him in cheerful spirits. His greatest deprivation was that he could barely catch sight of Barbe now, because the hole was always three-quarters filled by the body of a rock-dove; for the joinings of his rope must not scrape the rock lest they should chafe through, and a rock-dove stands more chafing than does a cotton rag.

The blue flag and the packet of hope jerked hopefully foot by foot down the rough side of the cliff, and swung gently to and fro at the end of their curious rope, scaring even the oldest inhabitants into momentary anger. Then the packet and the flag descended gently into a pocket of the rock where the cormorants dwelt apart by reason of their nasty habits and abominable smell. A particularly filthy old dame, whose plumage was absolutely rusty with age, had taken up housekeeping in

A BID FOR LIFE

that special spot and held it against all comers. She croaked out such horrible curses when any one came near her that all the rest sat at a respectful distance with their wings uplifted in amazement, as if struck with sudden paralysis, while the old lady nearly burst herself trying to lay an egg in this beautiful new nest; and when she turned round and saw the packet she mistook that for the egg, just as the guillemot had done. She sat on it conscientiously for many days, and made her mate—he was her fifth, and considerably younger than herself—bring her fish while he was still ravenously hungry himself, which put him into a very bad temper. He was always hungry, and so was she; and at last he got tired of it, and they had words, and I believe it led to a separation. In spite of all her efforts, she failed to hatch out Alain's packet, and her husband took to making remarks about it, as a hungry cormorant will; but she was too self-willed to leave it, and for anything I know she is sitting on it yet, and still hoping that something may come of it.

For some days the rope of dead birds swung gently to and fro against the face of the cliff, and some of the blue pennants fluttered in the wind. But they were invisible a quarter of a mile away, even when the birds were not there; and it was a rare minute when that happened.

Then the skua-gulls discovered that dead rock-pigeon, slightly "high," was a very dainty dish;

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and, the news spreading, they soon made an end of that forlorn hope, and even came skirling round the hole for more, so adding insult to injury. When Alain hauled in the slack of his odorous rope which lay in the lookout cleft, he found only one clean-picked skeleton and the head of another tied to its legs, and he knew that his first attempt was a failure. This depressed him not a little, and he racked his brains as to what to try next.

He had scrambled up to the top of his platform one evening to see the sun go down behind the Light, and was still sitting looking wistfully out when the lantern shot forth its first beam with a suddenness that made him start, although he had been waiting for it. Perhaps it was the thought that came with it that made him start. The lantern winked cheerfully at him; why should not he wink back at the lantern? It would be a very small wink, certainly; but the watchers in the Light might see even a very small light against the unusual background of black cliff, where they would never see his signals in the daytime.

This idea filled him to bursting-point. That first night he could not bring himself to calm and proper consideration of it; but he thought, and thought, and thought, and before morning he saw a possible way.

The problem was to burn a flare, large enough to stand a chance of attracting attention, through

A BID FOR LIFE

a hole no bigger than one's fist, and situated fifteen feet away at the end of a narrowing funnel. The blaze must be as good as it was possible to make it; moreover, it must be to some extent continuous, and not a simple flash in the pan, and it must go on night after night till it was observed. All these considerations, which seemed impossible to compass with the materials at his disposal, exercised his wits to the utmost.

It took some days of hard thinking and futile experiment before his difficulties were all surmounted and the way was clear. Fuel he had in plenty, but of a loose and scrappy character, altogether too short for his purpose unless he could manipulate it. If he only had oil! He set to work to get it. The pool in the sea cave was full of fish, and some of these held a fair quantity of oil just under the skin. Since his discovery of the dead monster there he had not cared to eat anything that came from that pool; but now he set to work and fished for his life, and caught close on fifty the first day. There were some mullet among them, and he found he got more oil out of them than out of any of the others. He let them all lie for a day, and then squeezed them between two stones in a slight hollow under an overhanging rock, where the drip from the roof could not get to them.

His fifty fish yielded him oil enough in his little pan to stir with the point of his finger, and another

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

fifty were maturing on the rock alongside. As oil it was poor stuff enough; but when he dropped some on his fire it sputtered and flared, and there was no doubt about its burning in the way he intended to use it.

He now flung down from aloft a great quantity of fuel, and carefully picked out of it all the most combustible portions and laid them on one side. Out of the refuse, which consisted chiefly of dried bird-droppings and short twigs and grasses, he made a small experimental cake, kneading it up with oil, and flattening it out on the rock with his hands. Then, sprinkling a roll of the longer stuff with oil, he rolled it up inside the cake like a long sausage, bound it carefully with tiny strips torn from Cadoual's clothes, and set it by the fire to dry, while he went on with his fishing and grinding and the tearing of garments into strips.

When the roll was dry he lighted it, and watched it burn with a bright crackling flare that fulfilled all his hopes and made his heart beat high. If he could make enough torches like that to push through the hole when lighted, it seemed to him impossible that so unusual a sight should fail to attract attention sooner or later. His only fear was lest the superstitions of the countryside should set the light down to spirits, and cause the Head to be avoided even more than it was now.

If Barbe saw it he believed she would under-

A BID FOR LIFE

stand, or at all events would be so exercised in her mind that she would not rest till she found out what it meant; for she had known Cap Réhel all her life, and he was quite sure Cap Réhel had never before winked back at the Light. Every day he saw her come out on to the gallery and stand looking wistfully at the Head, as though she knew it held him prisoner and prayed it to release him; and he counted on Barbe more than on all the rest.

He worked harder now than he had ever worked before, for the wage he worked for was his life. The pool of oil grew deeper each day. The sea cave swarmed with fish, for he flung all the pounded remains back into it, and the uncaught lived in clover till their own time came. Then when they had yielded their precious oil they in their turn went to feed their comrades.

As soon as he had oil enough to make a proper start he set to work on his torches. Each one was two feet long, for their frailty permitted of no more, and the end of each he narrowed so that it fitted into the hollowed top of the next one, like the joints of a fishing-rod. Each as it burned out was intended to light the next, and so to keep up an unbroken flare so long as he continued to fit torch to torch and push them through the hole.

Beyond the time he needed for eating and sleeping and watching for Barbe, he did nothing but fish, grind oil and make torches; and he made and dried

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

about ten a day, and stacked them in a dry archway ready for use. By the time his stock of torches had grown to close on one hundred and fifty he had been, as nearly as he could calculate, two months in the cavern—though, indeed, it seemed to him little short of two years—and he decided to make the grand experiment.

It was with a jumping heart that he carried up a score of the frail things to the top of his platform, for if this attempt failed he had nothing to fall back upon.

Barbe, he knew, took first watch as a rule, from lighting up till twelve. One hour, therefore, after he saw the first flash of the lantern he would light his first torch, and go on burning them till the twenty were finished. If Barbe came out into the gallery any time within that hour, and looked towards the dark headland, she would hardly fail to see the unaccustomed spark upon it.

He told himself very many times, however, that it might not be the first night that she would see it, nor the second, nor the third; but surely in time it would catch her eye and set her wondering. In the meantime, as he had torches for only seven nights, he went steadily on with his work, and no minute of his time was wasted.

He was at the lookout at sundown, and his heart was gladdened with the sight of Barbe standing in the gallery and gazing earnestly at

A BID FOR LIFE

Cap Réhel, as she always did. He was tempted to light up at once; but prudence told him that the red sun-rays on the whitened cliff would hide any flare he could make, and that he must wait till all was dark.

She went inside as the sun dipped, and presently the lantern shot forth its first beams, and he sat watching it. The vivid reds and golds faded slowly in the west, till sea and sky became the colour of dead ashes and mingled into one, and the light blazed bravely against its sombre background. He thought he could see Barbe moving to and fro in front of the light, and he gazed and gazed with his heart in his eyes, as though by the very intentness of his looking and the yearning that was in him he would draw her eyes towards him. Then at last, with a hand that shook with the thought of all that depended on it, he lighted his first torch at the fire, pushed it blazing merrily along the ledge towards the hole, fitted the butt into the head of the next one, and that into the next, and the next, till the flare passed out of his sight and he heard it crackling outside.

A wild shriek of dismay went up from the birds just settling to roost in the nooks and crannies of the cliff, and it was music to his ears, since it told him that his torch was burning. They screamed and wheeled, attracted yet fearful, and the mingling of their screams with the crackling of his torch filled his soul with hope.

CHAPTER XX

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

MADAME CADOUAL'S outraged feelings demanded life for life and blood for blood, and would be satisfied with nothing less. Her son had been murdered: some one must die for it. To a nature such as hers that was perhaps not an unnatural craving. What she really wanted was, of course, the forfeit of the life of the man who had taken the life of her son; but blind rage has no discriminations, and, failing the right man, any other man's life would have blunted the edge of her venom just as well. If she could have felt that some one had been made to suffer for the crime, her soul would have been comforted, or at all events her rage would have known some appeasement. As it was, however, no one had been brought to book, and her anger had nothing but itself to feed upon. The diet seemed to suit without satisfying it. It only waxed the fiercer as the days passed and nothing was done.

She raved at Sergeant Gaudriol to the point of apoplexy because he still declined to arrest Pierre

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

Carcassone unless she could show him more reasons for it than he could see himself.

She journeyed to Plouarnec and laid the matter before the authorities there. The authorities sent for Gaudirol, and, after hearing all he had to say, took his view of the case.

Madame Cadoual sent to Paris for detectives, and for many days Plenevec suffered their pertinent and impertinent inquisition, and resented it. In the result the detectives told madame that there was no evidence sufficient to justify the arrest of Pierre, and that, in their opinion, the very gravest suspicions attached to one Alain Carbonec, who had disappeared on the same day as her son. She bade them find Alain Carbonec, and they spent much time and money in the attempt, and finally gave it up. She gave them the rough edge of her very sharp tongue, and they returned to Paris well satisfied with their holiday on the coasts of Bretagne.

To Barbe this was a time of extreme bitterness and suffering. Nothing but death could account for Alain's absence and silence. If he were alive she felt sure he would have managed in some way to let her know it. She would sooner have known that he was alive, even though he had killed George Cadoual, as Pierre did not fail to inform her was the fact. But she did not believe it—unless, indeed, the two men had fought, which after all was

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

not unlikely. If they had, she was quite sure that Alain fought honourably, and that George Cadoual deserved all he got. But it was Alain himself in the flesh that she craved with a yearning that made her sick, and the belief that she would never see him again wrung her, body and soul.

That great frowning headland, if it could speak, could tell the story, she thought; and day after day, as she sat in the gallery, her eyes dwelt upon it with a sorrowful intensity that would have won a response from anything less adamantine.

How often she had held her breath at sight of him coming down those cliffs like a fly down a pane, and again when she watched him climb slowly up, with death at his heels and a cold hand gripping her heart, till he stood for a moment at the top and waved her another adieu and disappeared over the crest!

Ah, if only the good God and the pitiful Virgin Mother would hearken to her prayers and bless her with the sight of him coming once more! How she would reverence them, pray to them, thank them all her life long! She would make a special pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Folgoët. She would go all the way on her bare feet. She would burn candles innumerable before the shrine, if she had to sell her hair to do it. She would do anything that could be asked of her, if only Alain might come back.

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

He did not come, but she spent much time watching the way by which he used to come; and, all unknown to her, Alain sat watching her, as hungry for her as she for him. Only fifteen feet of rock and a mile of water between them, but for the time being these things separated them as completely as death itself. But death leaves no loopholes of escape, and Alain, as we know, had a loophole, and was working might and main to turn it to account.

The detectives from Paris came across to the Light, and departed as wise as they came. Pierre put out as many spines and bristles as a sea-porcupine, and Barbe's hollow-eyed sadness held them equally at arm's-length.

Popular opinion in Plenevec favoured the detectives' deductions, while resenting their methods of arriving at them. All that had passed between Cadoual and Alain and Barbe and Pierre was public property by this time, and even the bucolic mind could find therein no adequate reason why Pierre should have killed Cadoual. Very much the reverse, in fact.

"One would not have called the poor George amiable, *par exemple*; but, all the same, he was rich, *voyez-vous!* And that is what one looks for in a son-in-law." So it was quite inconceivable that Pierre should have put Cadoual out of the way.

While as regards Alain, in spite of their liking

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

for him: "Two men to one girl always makes for trouble, you understand; and when one of them tries to injure the other, why—*voilà l'affaire!*" And so, if Alain had their sympathy, no man or woman among them all but believed that he had killed Cadoual, quite possibly in fair fight, and had fled the country.

So the days passed sadly for Barbe, and the nights were long, and hopeless of brighter mornings. All her duties about the Light were performed with mechanical exactitude; but life had lost its flavour, as the sea and sky had lost their colours and the stars their friendliness.

She and Pierre spoke no more than was absolutely necessary. Alain was dead, and she set it all down to Pierre's account, and could never forgive him. She knitted no more blue stockings now, but sat in the gallery with listless hands, thinking of Alain and recalling all his words and looks, and all the little details of his lover-like comings and goings through the Race. She could see the strong white arm whirling through the air and reaching through the water, the upturn of the eager face, the impatient shake of the yellow curls. There was the rock to which the brown hand clung at last while he panted below it, out of sight, but, oh, so near to her throbbing heart! And he was gone. She would never see him more, and she would live all her life alone—more alone than if she had never

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

known him. Yet how sweet it was to have known and loved him, and to know that he had loved her! Better far to love the dead Alain all her life than never to have known him and to have married a George Cadoual.

Barbe was sitting brooding thus one night after lighting up, with her eyes fixed vacantly on the shoreward darkness, when a glint of light caught the corner of her eye. She thought it was the flash of a belated sea-bird's wing in the light that streamed from the lantern; but it remained—a tiny spark where she had never in all her life seen a spark before.

She had known Cap Réhel for twelve years; but never had she seen a light half-way up it before. She watched it curiously, and crossed herself devoutly, and prayed for protection from all evil spirits. It remained a tiny, steady flicker, and it seemed to stop in one place all the time—though she could not be positive of that, for at times, when she watched it very intently, she was not quite sure that it did not swing gently to and fro. It disappeared at last as suddenly as it had come, and she waited for a long time watching earnestly. But it came no more, and she wondered about it all night and all the next day, and put it down to spirits and felt the Light lonelier than ever.

The thought came to her that it might be Alain's spirit wandering about the gloomy Cap he used to

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

frequent when he was alive. She found a measure of comfort therein. If she could have been assured of it she would have been solemnly happy. Better his spirit than nothing.

The following night she was on the lookout for the light on the Head, and when it winked suddenly out of the darkness her heart leaped to it, and she sat eyeing it wistfully and wondering much.

She said nothing about it to Pierre either that night, or the next, or the next again. But when for seven consecutive nights the spark had never once failed to appear, she felt she must speak about it with somebody; and when Pierre tumbled into his bunk next morning, she lowered the boat and pulled once more across to Plenevec.

Barbe had been thinking of the strange light all night, as she thought about it every night, and she started out full of excitement; but her strokes grew longer as she neared the shore. She had run in as near to the Head as she dared go, to see if there was any sign of anything unusual about it; but the sea-birds clustered and swung as thick as ever, and there was no slightest indication of their ever having been disturbed. Could she possibly have deceived herself about the light? Would Sergeant Gaudirol believe her? Would he think it a matter of any consequence? She was half-inclined to go back when she stood at last on his doorstep, and when she screwed up her courage to knocking-point

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

it was such a hesitating tap that the Sergeant might well have been forgiven if he had slept through it. But Sergeant Gaudriol was accustomed to half-hearted summonses of the kind, and sprang up at once to see what trouble stood on his doorstep now.

Barbe caught a glimpse of the big silver-laced hat through the inch-opened door as he asked, "Who is there?"

When he saw who it was he begged her patience for two minutes, and when the door opened wide at the end of that time he was the Sergeant Gaudriol of our acquaintance, *en grande tenue* from head to foot.

"*Holà, petite!* What hast thou?" he asked, with quick kindness. "Anything wrong out there?" and he looked at her searchingly. He had not seen her for some weeks, and the sadness of her face touched him sharply. Grand Bayou Light held many possibilities.

"Nothing wrong, M. Gaudriol; but there is something I do not understand——"

"How then? What is it?"

"Each night, for the last seven nights, there has been a light on the side of Cap Réhel——"

"How? A light on Cap Réhel?"

"And never in all my life have I seen a light there before," she said, much strengthened by the Sergeant's genuine surprise.

"And what does Pierre say about it?" he asked.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"He has not seen it, and I have not told him. It comes each night about an hour after we light up. It stops for an hour, and then it goes."

"And you think?—"

"*Mon Dieu!* I know not. But—it is curious!"

"And you have thought it might have something to do with Alain Carbonec—is it not so?"

"In fact, yes, I have wondered— You see— well, Alain must have gone up Cap Réhel the very last thing we know of him; and I have sat and watched the cliffs, and wished they could speak and tell me what became of him. Then—this!"

The Sergeant nodded thoughtfully, with his eyes resting absently on her face. It was a far cry to his own courting days; but his liking for her and Alain made him understand, if dimly.

"You have not been to the Head in the daytime?" he asked.

"I came past just now, but the birds are as thick as ever, and I could see nothing out of the common."

He nodded thoughtfully again. He was turning over in his mind the possible causes of the phenomenon. There had been a time when a light on Cap Réhel would have had a very distinct meaning; but that time was very long ago, and the building of the Light had swept it all away. Then, knowing the villagers as well as he did, he did not believe a man of them would go anywhere near Cap

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

Réhel by night if he could help it. Why, some of them even believed that the sea-birds were the souls of mariners enticed ashore by those old false lights, and drowned there, and that the shrill cries of the drowning men, as they clawed the iron feet of the cliffs, lived again in the wild screaming of the birds. Undoubtedly, a light on Cap Réhel was curious and worth looking into, in view of the curious things that had happened in the neighbourhood of late.

"I will get Jan Godey to drop me at the Light to-night as he goes out," said the Sergeant at last, "and he will pick me up in the morning as he comes in. Then we will see, *ma fille*. What time did you say it comes?"

"About an hour after I light the lamps."

"I will be there."

"I cannot thank you, monsieur."

"Don't try, my child. We will find out what it means, never fear. Won't you have some coffee?"

But she thanked him again, and sped down to her boat, lest Pierre should miss her.

Jan Godey's lugger crept up to the lighthouse along the path of the setting sun that night, and Alain Carbonec saw it from his prison loophole, and his heart beat hopefully.

Jan tied his boat to the ladder with a long play of rope, bade his crew of one man and a boy wait for him, and followed Sergeant Gaudriol through

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

the doorway. The Sergeant had told him simply that he wanted to go to the Light. After thinking the matter over on the way out, he asked Jan to come upstairs with him. He was curious to hear what he would say about the strange light. There was always the bare possibility that something was going on behind the official back, though he did not think it likely. But, as we have seen, it was a part of Sergeant Gaudriol's creed that a man taken unawares sometimes spoke the truth by accident, and he believed himself quite capable of judging by Jan's conduct whether he knew anything about the matter or not.

Pierre received his unexpected visitors with much surprise.

"How then, M. Le Sergeant?" he said through the stem of his pipe. "Who's missing now?"

"It's all right, Pierre," said Gaudriol. "It is Mademoiselle Barbe I wish to see this time."

"Ah! you have some news?"

"We shall see. Where is she?"

"Up above. You'd better go to her."

The two men climbed the ladders to the lantern, and found Barbe just lighting the lamps.

"One moment, M. Le Sergeant, and I have finished. Won't you sit down here?" said she, as they bade her good-evening, and she showed them where to sit with their feet through the rails and their backs against the lantern. Before placing

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

himself beside Jan, who had never been up there before, and was filled with wonder at all he saw, Gaudriol stepped back alongside Barbe, and in a whisper bade her say no word of what he had come for.

Presently Pierre's curiosity as to what was going on above his head in his own house, and unknown to him, brought him up into the gallery also. He stood looking at them, with his pipe in his mouth and a puzzled scowl on his face, and then said gruffly, "Well, may I be crucified! Have you two taken a notion to roost here all night?"

"Just for a while, my friend. Jan, here, has never been up the Light before, and it amuses him."

"Humph!" growled Pierre, and decided to wait and see what was the meaning of it all. The silence was irksome to him, and presently he put out a feeler.

"No news of Carbonec yet?"

"No news," said the Sergeant.

"You'll never see *him* hereabouts again," said Pierre. "He's in America by this time."

"That is always possible."

"There's no doubt he met Cadoual over there"—he nodded towards Cap Réhel—"and put his knife into him, and then bolted. Which was the most sensible thing he could do."

"That is always possible," said the Sergeant once more; "but, for me, I do not believe it."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"How then? How do you explain matters, M. le Sergeant?"

"I have not got that length yet, *mon beau*; but time may unravel the skein."

Just then Barbe, gazing out over the rail at the farther side from Pierre, started as the tiny spark flashed out on the black breast of Cap Réhel. She stood gripping the rail and waiting intently for the first sign that it had caught her companions' notice.

Gaudriol had already seen it, but, true to his principles, waited to surprise Jan Godey's, and possibly Pierre's, first words on the subject.

Jan saw it first, since Pierre had his back to the rail.

"What's that?" said Jan in a scared whisper, and drew his feet inside the railings.

"What then?" asked Gaudriol. "What is it?" and Pierre turned to look also.

"*Nom-de-Dieu!* he said softly, in very genuine surprise. "I never saw the like of that before."

"It's a light," said the Sergeant.

"A light on Cap Réhel, and half-way up!" said Pierre in a whisper which told its own tale. "Then it's the devil himself that's holding it. *Mon Dieu!* what is it, then?"

Jan Godey did not speak, because his teeth were chattering so.

"Suppose we go and see what it is?" suggested Sergeant Gaudriol.

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

"I'm on duty. Can't leave the Light," said Pierre promptly.

"I—I—I—must get on to the fishing," said Jan Godey.

"*Bien!*" said the Sergeant. "Cut away, then, Jan. I never thought you had the courage of a mouse. Now I know it."

"But no, M. le Sergeant. Anything in reason if you will. But devil's lights, and spirits, and such-like things! No; I leave them to other people. I want none, I thank you."

"All right, Jan. Call for me in the morning. I'm going to stop here and think how that light got there."

"I'm going to bed," said Pierre.

"Better show Jan down to his boat, or he'll break his neck," said the Sergeant. "He's making the lighthouse shake as it is."

"*Eh bien! bon soir, messieurs!*" said Jan, in a huff, and disappeared inside the lantern with Pierre at his heels.

"What can it be, M. Gaudriol?" asked Barbe in a whisper.

"I cannot tell, child, yet. But we will try and find out. It is no Plenevec man who is making that light—if it is any man at all. They will all be like friend Jan. But there is courage in numbers. Tomorrow night I will be there by the Head with a

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

dozen men, if I have to drive them with my sword. How long do you watch?"

"Till midnight."

"Then you will permit me to keep you company, ma'm'selle, and you won't object to my smoking? And we will talk—*voyons*, we will talk of Alain Carbonec."

The following night found the Sergeant, as good as his word, with a dozen men in two boats lying off Cap Réhel.

The story of the devil's light had not lost in its travels, and the Sergeant had come near to having to live up to his threat of using his sword before he succeeded in getting the men to join him. Curiosity on the subject was at fever heat, indeed, and suggestions as to the meaning of the mysterious light were as plentiful as stones on Plenevec beach; but their superstitious fears ran just a point or two ahead even of their curiosity, and not a man of them but was screwing his rusty memory for long-forgotten prayers and wishing himself well out of the adventure.

They lay like two darker shadows on the dark swell of the sea, whose waves slipped smoothly under them and made no sound till they broke in thunder and lightning on the feet of Cap Réhel. The silence and the darkness lay heavy on them, their fears heavier still, and the waiting tried to the utmost that which Gaudiol's jeers and threats

A GLEAM OF LIGHT

had with difficulty evoked in them. Now and again a growling whisper passed from one to another, and they sat with their eyes glued to the black cliffs, waiting for the devil to light his lamp.

Sergeant Gaudriol's observance of them had more than satisfied him that not a man of them knew anything about the light, or was in any way responsible for it. Every man had his own opinion on the matter; but on one point they were all agreed, and that was, that if the light was anything like what Jan Godey said it was, it was no human hand that lighted it. And of ghosts and spirits every man of them was as full as he was of cider, which at best is no great augments of courage.

They were beginning to feel as if it must be getting on towards daylight, and those who were not in the Sergeant's boat were muttering audible curses and casting treasonable doubts on the whole matter, when the light suddenly thrust out through the solid black rock in front of them and held them all spellbound, while the wakened birds screamed and swooped round the flare like the evil spirits the bold mariners had been thinking of.

"*Voilà, mes amis!* Now what do you say?" said the Sergeant. "Is that a light or is it not?"

"It is the devil," said Jan Godey conclusively.

"*Si, si,* it is the devil without doubt," said the rest in whispers.

The flare burned quickly and wastefully, the

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

flames forking up and the burning embers falling down.

"It burns," said the Sergeant. "If it were the devil there would be no burned chips. It is human; but what it is I can't make out. Can you take us in right under it, Jan?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no, Sergeant. We should be smashed into pieces."

"*Bien!* Can you put a mark exactly opposite to it?"

"I can anchor a float with a stone. It will be somewhere near the place at flood in the morning."

"Do so, then, *mon beau*, and in the morning we will go up to the top and see what we can do."

They watched the light till it disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and then rowed back home, with ghosts and evil spirits and things that flap in the dark hovering thickly all about them.

There was much talk that night in Plenevec, and the lights in the windows were later of being put out than usual, and not a man of them went to the fishing, for the devil was abroad—or at all events on Cap Réhel—and till he was laid they would have no comfort. Some talked of sending to Plouarnec for a priest; but Sergeant Gaudriol bade them instead bring stout ropes in the morning, and they would find out for themselves what was the meaning of the sign.

"*Nom-de-Dieu!* if Sergeant Gaudriol expects *me*



A GLEAM OF LIGHT

to go down after his devil, why, he's very much mistaken. If he must poke into such things, let him go down himself, with his sword and his cocked hat, and talk to the devil to his heart's content. For me, *ma foi!* I have no desire that way. A priest now, and holy water—" And so said every man among them.

CHAPTER XXI

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —

BARBE had watched the light on the cliff the night before with the keenest curiosity. She had abundant faith in Sergeant Gaudriol, and felt certain he would get to the bottom of the mystery in some way or other. She had seen the boats steal out in the twilight, and she waited eagerly for the light on the Head to appear. Suppose it should fail them this night? If it did she would think it was some evil thing that feared detection; but if it burned as usual she would be confirmed in the belief that it was endeavouring to attract attention. So she waited in great excitement, and the minutes seemed hours. She began to fear it was not coming, when it suddenly shot out and startled her as much as it did the men in the boats, and she drew a breath of relief.

Now what would they do? She heard nothing, saw nothing. The light burned its usual time and disappeared, and nothing whatever happened. She hardly slept a wink for thinking of it, and startled Pierre into a bad temper by slipping silently

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —

through the lantern to the gallery before his watch was up, to stand there searching the shadowy cliffs with anxious eyes. Had the men in the boats done anything? Was the mystery explained? She fairly ached to know.

A single soft pencil of rosy light stole up the grey curtain behind Cap Réhel, like a holy finger calling a sleeping world to life and worship. The eastern dimness fluttered, softened, melted at the touch of the unseen fires, and the new day came like the silent unfolding of a majestic flower, glory after glory, till the great golden heart of it blazed up behind the cliffs, and Barbe was bathed in its splendours.

It was a perfectly still morning. The tide was running up to the flood, soundless and smooth as glass. The boiling Pot seemed still asleep, the white clouds of birds on the Head showed no sign of life, and where sea met land there was no fringe of foam.

As Barbe stood there in the morning glory, gazing earnestly towards the cliffs, there came along the breath of the dawn—or so it seemed to her—and so real was it that she gripped the rail with both hands and panted with the wonder of it—a muffled, tremulous whisper :

“Barbe! Barbe! Barbe!”

So real was it that she threw out her arms towards the sound, crying, “Alain! Alain!” And then stood wondering at the sound and at herself.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Could it be real, or was it only the outcome of her own great longing? She could not tell; but it had seemed very real to her.

The moment she was free from necessary household duties she lowered the boat while Pierre still slept, and pulled quickly across to Plenevec. She no longer acknowledged Pierre's right to control her actions. He had said she was not his daughter. Very well, then! It suited her to live at the Light, since she had nowhere else to go; but she considered herself at liberty to leave it if she chose at any moment, so long as her going did not interfere with the proper discharge of its duties.

She passed Jan Godey pulling out of the bay as she pulled in. "Did you learn anything last night, Jan Godey?" she cried.

"No, nothing," said Jan, and pulled out to his float.

"M. le Sergeant is not there," an old woman told her as she knocked at Gaudriol's door. "He is gone with everybody else up the cliff to catch the devil."

Barbe hurried after them. She found all Plenevec on top of Cap Réhel, and a heated discussion in progress as to the fit and proper person to be let down by a rope to see if anything was to be found out about the mysterious light.

Unanimous opinion indicated Sergeant Gaudriol himself as that person; and the old man acknowl-

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —

edged the suitability of the choice, but confessed his doubts as to his fitness for the job—which, indeed, offered no inducements to any one. Even an expert cragsman would find it no pleasure-trip; and, *Dieu-de-Dieu!* one did not need to break one's neck to prove that there was a devil. If M. le Sergeant was anxious to make his personal acquaintance, why, now was his chance! He might rail and storm and jeer, and call them every name under the sun; but there was nothing in the law that could compel them to go down there on any such fool's errand. No, *parbleu!*—thousand times, no!

There was the cliff, and out there was Jan Godey in his boat, hanging gallantly on to the float. The ropes were there, and the brave, strong men to hold them at the top, and slack and pull to order; but the leading *rôle* was still vacant.

Sergeant Gaudriol was beginning to think he would have to doff his plumage and go himself, though he felt very doubtful about ever coming up again, for the whirling clouds of birds and the seething gulf made his head swim as it was, when Barbe came panting up the slope behind.

"*Tiens!* La Carcassone," said one to another. "She'll go if you ask her, M. le Sergeant."

"Go where?" asked Barbe as she joined them. "I will go anywhere M. Gaudriol wants me to go."

"But I don't want you to go, *ma fille*. I want

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

one of these hulking lumps to go; but they are all afraid. It seems I must go myself."

"Down there?" asked Barbe.

"But yes," chorused a dozen of them. "Down there in a rope among the birds to look for the devil that makes the light."

"And who will hold the ropes?"

They were all ready, willing, even anxious to hold the ropes. They were bold and gallant men enough at the right end of the ropes; but at the wrong end, and on such a questionable quest—*ma foi*, that was quite another affair.

"I will go, M. Gaudriol," said Barbe. "My head is steady with being up in the Light, you see. If they will make me a loop big enough to sit in, and a thin cord for signals, I will go."

They would make her twenty loops if she wanted them, and give her all the signal-cords she could hold.

"I was afraid I would not be in time," she said naïvely as she watched them testing the loop. "I was afraid some one else would have gone."

They looked at her in very great surprise, and saw that there was a red flush on the pallid tan of her face, that her eyes were shining like jewels set in velvet cases, and that her lips were almost smiling.

"But, *ma fille*—" began the Sergeant.

"It is Alain, M. le Sergeant. He called to me

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —

this morning," she said, and the old man shot a quick look of surprise at her.

"*Mon Dieu!* she is mad," said a woman; and that was the opinion of the rest.

"The good God will take care of her," said another, who was prepared to hang round her own man's neck as a dissuasive if he had offered to go—which he had not the slightest intention of doing.

"But yes, it is true, they are under His care," said another.

"But, *ma fille*—" began Sergeant Gaudriol once more.

"There is no need, M. le Sergeant," said Barbe. "It is for me, this," and she caught up the thin line and bade one of them knot it round her right wrist.

"*Voyons!* she said. "What are the signals?"

"One for up, two for down, three for right, four for left," said the man who was knotting the line. "To stop her, shake the cord."

"*Bien!* Now, messieurs, I am ready;" and she stood inside the loop, gathered it up in her two hands, and stepped to the edge of the cliff. Those who saw her say that her face shone with a glory like the face of the Holy Mother in their childhood's dreams; but it may have been only the glory of the morning sun and of the great hope that was in her.

She set her feet firmly against the slope, with her back to the sea, and settled her weight down into

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

the bight of the rope against the steady pull of twenty strong hands.

"Allons!" and the rope ran slowly from hand to hand, and then all that the silent half-circle of watchers saw was the groove it cut in the close, rough turf of the cliff-edge, and beyond that the flawless blue of the sea, and between these the whirling cloud of birds that rose and circled and swooped, and screamed curses at the invader of their solitudes.

The faces up there on the cliff were pale and anxious, and they whispered to one another that she had gone to her death, unless indeed the good God held her safe because she was mad; and Sergeant Gaudriol's face was black. But, if they could still have watched the face that swung there between sea and sky, they would have seen it glowing with a radiance as bright and steady as the lamp that swings before the altar and goes not out by day or night; and the light was not the light of the sun.

When, for seven nights, Alain Carbonec had burned his toilsomely constructed flares and reaped no reward, his spirits sank somewhat. He went on doggedly, making more, however, and burned twenty each night, and told himself that the continuance of the light was bound sooner or later to catch somebody's eyes and lead them to investigate it. Their superstitious fears, he knew, would stand in the way of that; but Gaudriol was a man, and

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND —

when Gaudriol heard of the strange light on Cap Réhel, Alain did not believe he would rest till he found out what it meant. Every spare moment he could snatch from his torch-making he spent at the lookout, watching for the slightest indication of results. When the peephole was occupied by the torch he could, of course, see nothing.

He scrambled up his platform in the early morning of the day after Gaudriol and his men had watched the light from their boats, and his eyes lighted on Barbe just as the first sun-rays were playing on her and flashing back from the glass of the lantern behind her, so that she seemed wrapped in the golden glory. In a passion of longing he burrowed into the funnel towards her and shouted: "Barbe! Barbe! Barbe!"

The cry rumbled up into the roof behind him in murmurous thunders, and some of it, fined to a point by the tenuity of its passage, escaped through the hole in front, travelled tremulously along the still morning air to Barbe, and reached her like a whisper from another world. He saw her throw out her arms towards him, as though she had indeed heard, and his heart leaped with hope. He watched her drop the boat and row swiftly towards the shore out of his sight, and he sat at his lookout and waited.

CHAPTER XXII

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

BARBE as she swung in the rope between sea and sky was nearer heaven than earth. Her thoughts were all for Alain, and never a one for herself. Her love filled all her being, and shone out from her face, and fear had no place in her.

Alain was there—somewhere: where, and in what case, she could not stop to think. He had called to her, and she had come.

The face of the cliff caved away just there, and her descent was smooth and easy. The guillemots and kittiwakes and skua-gulls rose around her in shrieking clouds. They swooped and fluttered at her to knock her off her perch. She kicked at them playfully with her bare feet, and waved them off with her hand. How wonderful was their free, beautiful flight! How pitilessly cold the glassy stare of their inhuman eyes! If she fell they would swoop down and peck at her dead body, the beautiful, soulless things.

Then she passed some long, level black rifts in the cliff, and a cloud of rock-doves swept past her

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

and went up into the sky. Could Alain be in there?

At the top of her voice she cried, "Alain! Alain!"

There was no response but the louder shrieking of the angry birds. She went lower and lower, and the rocks curved out to meet her. She must be half-way down now, and still no sign of Alain.

Then the rope stopped running as the men bent on another one up above. Then came a jerk and a shower of earth as the knot ground through the groove, and she was descending again, and her eyes swept every inch of the cliff-face for a sign. It looked all smooth and white from the Light; but here, close at hand, she saw that the rocks were grey and black and old and scarred, and that it was only the birds that had whitened it. Every level inch was covered with their droppings; and she smiled as she passed at their tiny housekeepings, and at the stolid bravery of the little matrons who only glanced up at her apprehensively and cuddled down the tighter on their eggs.

She glanced down at the water. It was drawing very close, and so far not a sign of what she sought. Surely she had come too far. To cover all the ground she must move along to right or left. Which? It did not matter, since both were equally unknown. One meant up, two meant down,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

three— She was not sure. She gave three tugs at the cord, and presently commenced to drag slowly along the cliff to the left. The rope caught now and again on rough points of rock, and freed itself with a jerk that nearly flung her out. It scoured the face of the cliff and swept it bare of birds, and away above her head her eye fastened on a scorched and blackened patch with a blacker round hole in the middle.

Her heart leaped into her throat, and for a moment her head swam, and the ragged cliff reeled and swung in front of her. She clung with both hands to the rope till things grew still again; for that round black hole was where the light came from— she was sure of it. And that was the end of her quest. For a moment longer she hesitated. What would the scorched hole yield her? Everything— or nothing?

She tugged sharply at the guide-rope, and was drawn slowly up towards the hole. Her head was level with it, and she shook the cord vigorously. She looked into the hole. It was black as a coal. And out of it there came a strange hollow voice crying, "Barbe! Barbe!" as of one shut in behind the panels of a bed.

She could not speak for the fluttering of her heart in her throat again. She had to swallow it very many times before she could gasp, "Alain! Alain! Is it thou?"

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

"God be thanked!" said the hollow voice.
"Come closer, Barbe."

"Is it indeed thou, Alain?"

"Truly, truly I, my beloved."

"And where art thou?"

"Inside the cliff—a cavern——"

"And how can I get thee out?"

"Wait!" he said. "Listen, my Barbe! Up above there are openings in the cliff——"

"I saw them."

"Pass a rope through them with an axe at the end of it, and make the other end fast up above, and I will be with thee in half an hour. You understand?"

"I understand. Can I not touch thy hand, Alain?"

"There are four mètres of rock between us, dear one. Hasten with the rope, and I will be with thee."

"I go. Adieu, Alain! Come quickly—quickly!"

She pulled once at the cord and the hole was below her. She saw the black rifts above her on the right. She was past them. Strong hands grasped her under the shoulders and drew her up over the cliff, and she fell prostrate among them like one bereft of life.

The women were still slapping her hands when her eyes opened.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Ah, *la voilà!*" said one; then Sergeant Gaudriol bent over her, and she sat up.

"Can you tell us what you saw, *ma fille?*" he asked, as one tries to induce a child to tell its little story.

"It is Alain, monsieur."

"Alain! Alain Carbonec!" said the Sergeant, and eyed her keenly to see if she were in proper possession of her wits, and all the throng gathered round her with ejaculations of surprise and incredulity.

She stood up, somewhat shakily, for her nerves were relaxed after the too great strain.

"Alain is there—in a cavern in the rock. He spoke to me through a small opening."

"Could you see him, my dear?" asked one doubtfully.

"I could not see him. He said there were four mètres of rock between us. There are some larger holes just under the cliff up here. He told me to send down a rope through those holes with an axe tied to it, and to make the end fast up above, and he would be up in half an hour."

"*Allons, donc!*" cried Gaudriol, flaming to the work. "What, in the name of Heaven, are you all gaping round here for? An axe—a rope! Who's got an axe? What a set of fools not to have an axe among you! Off you go—you, Jean-Marie—go like the deuce and bring an axe." And Jean-Marie

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

started off down the slope at a fisherman's gallop.

"*Tiens! Jean-Marie!*" shouted Gaudirol after him. "Bring also wine and bread and some cognac. *Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* the poor fellow has been down there for two whole months, and God knows if he's had anything to eat in all that time."

The men busied themselves getting the fresh rope ready and making it fast. The women talked among themselves in murmurs. The children sat and gaped at it all. Gaudirol stood by Barbe.

"You are quite sure, my child?"

"So sure, monsieur, that I am ready to go again to bring him up."

"Nay, you have done enough. You have done well. They will all be ready to go so long as it is a man they are after, and not a ghost."

Presently Jean-Marie came toiling back with his load, and cast himself panting on the turf. He had not run so far and so fast since he was a very small boy.

"Now, who goes?" cried Gaudirol.

They were all eager to go, and the Sergeant made his own selection.

"You, Loïc Breton; you are the strongest, and he may need help. Now, where are these holes? Can you show us, *ma chère?*"

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Barbe thought for a moment, then pointed midway between the grooves in the turf. "Just about midway between them," she said.

They dropped the rope with the axe tied to it, and Loïc Breton stepped into the loop of the other rope.

"Hold tight, you boys," he said, with a big grin; "I'm heavier than the little one;" and down he went out of sight.

They had to swing him to the right in answer to his signals. Then the check came up the rope.

"He has found the holes," they said; and, as the rope jerked to and fro in the groove, "He is swinging into them;" and when it hung taut and still, "He is there."

The other rope to which the axe was tied jerked lightly, and they said, "He is putting it through the hole."

Then above the screaming of the birds they heard the sound of hammering on the rock. Loïc was thoughtfully chopping away the granite slats of the window. Then silence, and a breathless waiting that seemed endless.

At last a shout from below, and in a moment a strong pull at the guide-rope, and with a cheery sing-song the men ran away up the slope, and a pallid face and a pair of half-closed blinking eyes

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

and a tangle of pale-yellow curls rose above the edge of the cliff, and Alain Carbonec had come back to life and his fellows.

Barbe ran to him with a cry, half-pity, half-joy, and the rest hung back, for in truth he seemed half-ghost and hardly human. But the way he kissed Barbe was human enough, and he laughed aloud for joy as he wrung the Sergeant's hand, and the others gathered round him.

"Eat, *mon gars!*" said Gaudriol, offering him bread and wine and cognac all at once.

"A mouthful of bread and a sip of wine," said Alain. "I have not tasted bread for two months. *Mon Dieu!* how good it is. *Merci, monsieur,* just a drink of wine. It is good also."

"You have had to eat down there?" asked Gaudriol.

"Surely, or I should not be here. I have had rock-doves and fish, and water to drink; but one tires of them. Who'll give me a pipe? and a dozen pipes were thrust at him. "It's six weeks since I smoked the last of poor Cadoual's cigarettes."

"Ah, yes—Cadoual!" said the Sergeant, and the mention of his name jarred on them all. "Will you tell us about it, *mon beau*—here on the spot? What does it all mean? How did you get down there?"

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"But yes, I will tell you—as soon as I've tasted the smoke. How good it is! And the sun and you all. *Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* but it is good to be above the earth again, my friends."

He was very greatly changed. His bright face and yellow hair and merry eyes and voice had made one think of sunshine and breezes. Now they were like moonlight on a quiet night. His skin was pallid under the tan; his hair was visibly whitened; his eyes blinked at the light; his very voice had changed. He looked, indeed, like the ghost of the Alain Carbonec they had known.

Presently, sitting there in the midst of them, with his back to the sun, he told them all that had happened to him, from the time he found himself lying among the rock-doves to the hearing of Barbe's voice outside his lookout. And when he told the story of the devil-worm they drew up closer one to another, and shivered in the sunshine, and the children's eyes held the shadows of many evil dreams to come.

"It is a very strange story," said Sergeant Gaudriol when he had finished; "but I believe every word of it."

"It is all just as I have told you, M. le Sergeant," said Alain, who saw no reason why he should not believe.

"I know," said the old man thoughtfully; "but we have others to convince."

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

"How, then?" said Alain.

"Madame Cadoual believes it was you who killed her son."

"What!" and he sprang up, blazing with wrath. "I killed him—I? And it was he who did his best to kill me, and told me so! *Dieu-de-Dieu!* but that is too much!"

"Not a soul among us believes it, my boy," said the Sergeant, and acquiescent murmurs ran round among them. "But we have to deal with a woman gone crazy with grief, and—well, you know what she is. First she tried to fix it on Pierre Carcasone; then she got down detectives, and they rooted about all round, and gave it as their opinion that it was not Pierre, but you. They thought, you see, that you had bolted, and—you know—it is always the absent one who is to blame."

"*Eh bien!* I am returned, and I have been all the time where Cadoual himself put me. No thanks to him that I am still alive, *ma foi!*"

"There must be some easier way into that place," said Gaudiol, incubating his ideas. "He could never have got you in the way you came out."

"That's certain. I could never have got out if Loïc had not opened the window."

"And, *par-dieu!* where is Loïc? I had forgotten all about him." They had all forgotten all about him.

"He went down the rope to see where I had come

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

from," said Alain. "He'll come back when he's tired—if he doesn't get lost. You can ramble for days down there."

"We must find that other way in," said the Sergeant. "That may tell us tales. Show us, *mon gars*, exactly where you were walking when—you know——"

Alain jumped up and led them round the cliff. "Now, *voyons!*" he said, casting about, "here is where I always came up. Then along here. So—through the bushes—" and he stopped and looked round. "To the best of my knowledge, M. le Sergeant, it was somewhere about here. You must remember I was not noticing particularly. I was just going along, thinking of—of where I had been, and more of where I was going—" He looked at Barbe, who smiled back at him.

"Now, my friends," said Gaudriol, "scatter and search every inch of ground. Much may depend on it."

They broke and searched as eagerly as though they looked for treasure; and the children searched, too, chattering and laughing and squealing at the pricklings of the gorse, with no idea that they were looking for the life of a man.

But their efforts came to nothing, and it was only when they were about giving up the search that accident revealed what endeavour had failed to discover. The youngsters had soon grown tired

INTO THE BLESSED LIGHT OF DAY

of finding nothing, and had taken to subdued skylarking among the great stones of the menhir. The ghostly atmosphere and the place forbade more than surreptitious punches and unexpected pushes into favourable clumps of gorse, and the consequent rushes of retreat and pursuit; and it was one such successful attack that led to the finding of the upper cave.

Jannick Godey, son of Jan, coming stealthily round one of the stones, found Master Hervé Buvel standing with his back to him. Jannick dived headlong into that tempting back, and Hervé disappeared with a subdued howl into the bushes in front of him; but instead of rising full of wrath and prickles, as Jannick hoped and expected, Hervé had gone completely out of sight. Jannick's pent-up fear and breath were just on the point of coming out in a roar when Hervé stuck up his head among the gorse and gasped, "A hole!" It was a hole they had been told to look for, and Jannick's roar of fear turned at once into a shout of triumph.

"*V'là!* M. le Sergeant, we have found it. I found it myself, and put Hervé Buvel in to make sure."

"Good boy!" said the Sergeant. "Let us see the hole, then."

"It is here, M. le Sergeant, and it is deep," squeaked Hervé; and Gaudriol planted a heavy



BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

official foot in the gorse and drew him out. Behind the bush the foot of the huge stone was hollowed. The burrow ran into the earth with a steep slope, and looked anything but inviting.

The other searchers gathered round.

CHAPTER XXIII

FROM PRISON TO PRISON

“LET me try it, M. Gaudriol,” said Alain, pushing through. “My eyes are used to the dark;” and he disappeared into the hole.

Some of the younger men were making to follow when Sergeant Gaudriol stopped them.

“No,” said he; “the fewer the better. If it is the place, we want to see it as the last users left it.” Alain’s head came up behind the gorse, and he crept carefully back into the daylight.

“It looks as if it might be the place,” he said. “It opens out; but I cannot see much, and there may be openings down below.”

“We will return with lights,” said Gaudriol. “Can I get in? There is not too much room, *ma foi!*”

“If you take off your hat and coat you might manage,” said Alain, somewhat doubtfully, as he measured M. Gaudriol’s bulk with his eye.

“I’d take off my shirt and my skin to get what I want,” said the Sergeant warmly, for he saw that there would be trouble, and possibly danger, for

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

Alain unless evidence could be found to confirm his story.

"Understand, all of you," he said, looking round, "no one enters there till I give permission. Ah, *mon beau*," as Loïc Breton came swinging along, "what did you find down there?"

"But, M. le Sergeant, it is a wonder beyond words; and to think we have none of us knew of it. There are caves and caves. I dared not go far lest I should get lost."

"Away over there," said Alain, pointing inland towards the far-away tower of Landroel, "is a cave from which I could find no outlet. Against the end wall there is a man kneeling in prayer. The water drips on him for ever, and he is turned to green stone. He wandered there till his heart failed him, and then he knelt, and prayed, and died. But I will go down with you any time you like, M. le Sergeant, and show you all the things I have told you of."

"To-morrow, then," said Gaudriol. "We have had enough for to-day; and you, *mon gars*, deserve a day above ground. And how, in the name of Heaven, do you expect me to get down there?"

"It is quite easy," said Loïc. "Over the cliff and you swing into the hole I made with the axe, and then you slide down the rope for seventy or eighty mètres, and there you are."

"And how do you get back?"

FROM PRISON TO PRISON

"Same way," said Loïc; "just climb the rope and——"

"Humph!" said Sergeant Gaudriol. "Well, we shall see."

He insisted on Alain and Barbe going to his own house, in spite of Mère Pleuret's protestations. At sight of Alain come back from the dead she flung her arms round his neck and wept over him as glad to see him, almost, as if it were indeed her own boy come home again. But Gaudriol's thoughts were all of the future, and the three of them sat into the small hours of the morning discussing the matter. The Sergeant questioned Alain minutely till every smallest point was clear to him; and Barbe sat holding his hand and gazing at the sputtering sticks, content with life since he was by her side.

Next day Alain did the honours of his prison-house to such members of the community as cared to risk their lives over the passage. He showed them all the wonders of the place, from the wavering remains of the devil-worm in the sea cave to the petrified green man in the farthest cavern, and their amazement at all they saw was very great.

Barbe was anxious to go, too; but just as she was stepping to the cliff-edge after the rest Gaudriol stopped her.

"Come with me," he said. "We have work to do, you and I;" and he led her along to the open-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

ing below the great stone. "Do you know what is going to happen, *ma fille*?"

"No, monsieur."

"Alain will probably be arrested to-day for the murder of George Cadoual."

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" wailed Barbe, with startled eyes. "I thought his troubles were over."

"On the contrary, they are but beginning, if I know anything of Mère Cadoual. She is bursting with venom and thirsting for blood. But we will save him, you and I. He has done his part; we will do ours. Now, help me in here."

It was a very tight fit; but he managed to creep in at last with clothing sufficient left on him for decency. He had brought candles, and with their assistance they made minute examination of the cave. He bade Barbe step lightly, disturb nothing, and miss nothing.

It was Barbe who made the first discovery.

"*Tiens!* here is something," and she picked up from a corner a blue stocking-cap. "It is Alain's. I know it by the edging."

"Good! But it proves nothing. *Allons, ma fille!*" and they groped over the floor inch by inch.

"Miss nothing!" said the Sergeant time after time. "Nothing is too small;" and it was he who made the next find—the fag-end of a cigarette.

"Good!" said he. "I would like some more of

FROM PRISON TO PRISON

those;" and in time they found two more similar scraps.

They groped and spied, every faculty sharpened to a fine point; but it looked as if all the discoveries had been made. Their attention so far had been concentrated on the floor. M. Gaudriol, straightening his back by way of a change, exclaimed suddenly, "*Voilà que'qu' chose!*" at something which caught his eye on the level. It was a ring of hardened wax, where a candle had burned to death. He examined it carefully, and then proceeded, with infinite labour and caution, to dig out with his knife the projecting slab of rock on which the candle had stood, so keeping the wax ring intact.

"That may be of value," he said. "It remains to be seen."

Not another thing could they find, until they went step by step down the tunnel and came near to falling through the rift into the lower cave. They stood and peeped cautiously into the apparently fathomless darkness.

"That is how they got in," he said, and dropped a stone. It made no sound, and they recoiled at thought of the bottomless depths, and crept back to the twilight and so up into the day.

Their search had not yielded much; but Gaudriol was disposed to think these things might be enough. He could not be sure, however; for he had had long experience of examining magistrates and pub-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

lic prosecutors and country juries. He knew the craving the ordinary man has to see every crime paid for and cancelled, so to speak, by an adequate penalty; and he knew the unrest and feeling of insecurity engendered by unrequited crime in the minds of both the people and the law. He had seen men condemned on circumstantial evidence, and their innocence come to light after they had expiated the crimes they had never committed; and he remembered that the detectives from Paris had given it as their opinion that it was Alain Carbonec who was guilty of this crime. Certainly one of their strongest arguments was the fact that Alain had disappeared; but the Sergeant saw that a skilful prosecutor might weave, out of the simple facts of the case, a mesh of incrimination from which Alain might find it difficult to escape. He knew that Madame Cadoual would spring at the chance of making some one pay for her son's death; and that even though there might be an element of doubt in the matter, she would still be more satisfied to have Alain pay the penalty than to have no penalty paid at all. For himself, he believed every word of Alain's story; but unfortunately it was not he who had to be satisfied in the matter.

When they got back above ground he examined their finds and made pronouncement on each.

"Those are Cadoual's cigarettes. No one else hereabouts smokes the like of them. That candle

FROM PRISON TO PRISON

was a wax one. They are not common. I must look into that. The cap, you say, is Alain's. The big stain at the back is blood. That is all right! I think these things will help, *ma mie*, and I will see that they are rightly used."

Matters turned out just as the Sergeant had foreseen. It was after mid-day when the men came up out of the cavern. Gaudriol himself had gone back to the village with his treasure-trove; but Barbe sat herself down on the edge of the cliff to wait for Alain. She would have liked to go down into the wonderful cavern, and she knew she could manage the descent well enough; but the thought of climbing two hundred feet up a rope rather appalled her.

The men came up over the brow one by one, Alain last of all, and she saw his eyes lighten with the look she loved as they fell upon her. He came quickly to her and put his arm round her, and they all went down the slope together.

"Little sister!" he whispered in her ear, with a glad laugh which belied his words, and brought the colour into her face.

The men were full of the things they had seen below ground. They all talked at once, twenty-five to the dozen, and no one listened for a moment to any one else. Alain and Barbe were the only silent ones, and that because their speech had no need of the uncouth clothing of words.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

As they came along the row of houses which constitute Plenevec, they saw, standing in front of Gaudriol's house, the old Sergeant himself, looking graver and fiercer than usual, and two other gendarmes; and beyond them Pierre Carcassone came striding up the shingle.

"How then?" said Loïc Breton. "What do the big moustaches want now?"

"Oh, Alain!" gasped Barbe. "They have come for you!"

"For me, child?" he said, with a laugh. "What do they want with me?" He thought it was only her fears for him that prompted the words.

"M. Gaudriol said it would be so," she said, clasping her hands more tightly round his arm and speaking very quickly. "It is Madame Cadoual. She will try to make out that you killed her son."

"How then? I killed Cadoual?"

"We know it is not so, and we have found things in the cave below the stone which will prove it. Do not lose heart, Alain. M. Gaudriol and I will be at work——"

Here the strange gendarmes came forward, and Gaudriol followed slowly behind.

"Which of you is Alain Carbonec?" asked one.

"I am," said Alain, stepping forward.

"Our instructions are to convey you to Plouarnec, *mon gars*, to answer for the murder of George Cadoual."

FROM PRISON TO PRISON

"But George Cadoual was not murdered, monsieur," said Alain quietly; "therefore it is not——"

"All that is quite possible, *mon gars*; but we have our instructions, and we must carry them out, you understand."

"Assuredly," said Alain; and he turned to Barbe and kissed both her pale cheeks and looked once into her eyes. "It will be but for a very short time, my dear one, and then——"

And to Gaudriol he said, "M. le Sergeant, you do not believe this of me?"

"Not for a moment, my boy. I know you too well. You will be back here in no time, and happiness will await you."

"I am at your service, messieurs," said Alain, and he and the two gendarmes walked off along the road to Plouarnec.

"*Dieu-de-Dieu!*" said Pierre, striding up to the group that stood looking after them. "Tell me, some one, was that Alain Carbonec or was it his ghost?"

No one answered him for a moment. On some of them his presence grated harshly. It required an impatient "*Eh-b'en!* are you all dumb?" from Pierre before he got a reply, and then it was Gaudriol who said:

"Yes, it is Alain Carbonec. He has been shut up inside the rocks for two months, and now they have taken him to prison for a crime which he never committed."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Ah, truly!" said Pierre, and nodded his head in a way which suggested a doubt on that subject. "*B'en!* now you will come home, I suppose?" to Barbe.

"No," said she, with a decided shake of the head; "I shall stop here."

"As you please; but if you don't come back now, you don't come back at all."

"I will not come back at all."

Then Pierre went back to his boat, which Jan Godey had tied to the iron ladder as he passed the Light the previous night.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

THEN began for Alain Carbonec and Barbe Carcassone such a time of trial and suffering as only a vindictive woman, who has gained the ear of the law, can inflict on an innocent man and the heart to whom he is dearer than all the world.

As soon as she heard of Alain's resuscitation, Madame Cadoual went straight to Plouarnec and demanded audience of M. Besnard de Sarras, the examining magistrate. She told her story with such explicitness of detail and such emphasis of assertion, stating as fact what was at most only possibility, and backing it all up with the statements of the Paris detectives, that M. de Sarras had no option but to order the immediate arrest of Carbonec.

Doubtless, in her own heart, Madame Cadoual believed all her assertions. She had thirsted for vengeance; she had raged and chafed at the disappearance of the man at whom all the facts pointed. Now, when he was suddenly delivered into her hands, she did not waste a moment. The

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

volcano within her blazed into new life, and M. de Sarras was overwhelmed in the molten flow.

He briefly examined the accused, listened to the extraordinary story which was the only evidence he opposed to madame's sworn statements, and duly committed Alain to the assizes.

Barbe was heart-broken. Gaudriol was deeply chagrined. Alain's preliminary examination had, of course, taken place in private, and afforded him no chance of doing more than tell his own story; and the story he told was so surprising that the magistrate received it with a doubt which he hardly took the trouble to conceal.

Gaudriol saw M. de Sarras, and did his best to get him to look into the prisoner's side of the case. M. de Sarras told him plainly that the matter as it stood was beyond his powers to deal with; it must go before a jury. It would only be a question of another month's detention; and, said the magistrate with a shrug, after the experiences Carbonec had gone through, that would be the merest bagatelle.

That month between Alain's arrest and his trial at Plouarnec was the longest and dreariest Barbe ever spent, and there was that in it, too, for the trying and testing of her soul which none but she and one other ever knew.

She had thought, when she believed Alain dead, that sorrow could bite no deeper. She had yet to

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

learn that death is not the worst that may threaten or befall one, and her heart was still to be wrung white with anguish for him and for herself.

Not for one second did she believe him guilty. But night after night she and Gaudriol went over the facts of the case; and even Gaudriol, as sure of Alain in his own mind as Barbe was herself, could not but acknowledge to himself, though never to her, that the facts against him were terribly strong, while those that made for him seemed painfully weak.

Barbe lived with Mère Pleuret. The old lady had insisted on it. But every evening, when Sergeant Gaudriol's duties were over, barring rare and unexpected calls, she went to the old man's cottage and sat with him over his fire, while he smoked thoughtfully, and assured her that all would be well with Alain, with so much insistence that she began at last to have her doubts about it. She walked the six miles to Plouarnec almost every day, in the hope that the rigidity of Alain's seclusion would be relaxed; but it was not, and she never once set eyes on him till he was brought into court on the day of his trial.

And now that befell Barbe which occasioned her distress of mind so great that the remembrance of it never left her. The outward and visible sign of it remained all her life long in a deepening of the understanding in her grave, dark eyes. She passed

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

into the furnace a girl, with all the vague fears and hopes of maidenhood before her. She came out of it a woman who had looked sorrow in the face, and had wrestled for her life, and—saving grace—for the life of another dearer than herself, and for whom she had been willing to throw her own life away. It was only by the mercy of God that the sacrifice she was ready to make was not consummated. She never forgot it.

Gaudriol had sought out for Alain's defence a certain young advocate, one Noel Bernardin, whose acumen had greatly impressed him in other trials. It was not without difficulty, however, that he succeeded—or, at all events, was instrumental—in winning him to the cause, for Bernardin was a rising man and much run after.

Noel Bernardin came of the old Huguenot family down near Saintes in the Lower Charente. His mother was a Scotswoman, one of the Kerrs of Dalkeith. His father was, of course, that General Bernardin who fell in the Hell Trench at Gravelotte, when the fate of France and Prussia hung by a hair. After the General's death Madame Bernardin spent much of her time among her own people in Scotland, and young Noel finished the English side of his education at Merchiston, in Edinburgh, and learned there many things not found in books, which stood him in good stead. Without this training—well, the bullet at Gravelotte which

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

sent him to Merchiston made for the salvation of Barbe Carcassone and Alain Carbonec.

These things are necessary to explain him. From his father he inherited the hot blood of the Bernardins, which had never thinned nor cooled even under the refining influences of Huguenot teaching or persecution. From his mother he got a clear, logical head, a warm heart, and great tenacity of purpose. From Edinburgh he went to Paris, and flung himself into the student life in all its phases, good and bad, as heartily as he had learned to fling himself into the games on the Merchiston fields.

Whatever Noel Bernardin did he did with all his might, and when he set his heart on a thing it rarely escaped him. He was at this time a brilliant lawyer, as good-looking as he was clever, and was making a great reputation at the Paris Bar. His thoroughness was something to wonder at, and his honesty was such that his fellows first predicted failure for him, and then marvelled greatly at his success.

It was he who refused a fee of twenty-five thousand francs from the Jew banker Roussillon in that somewhat scandalous case of his; and he refused it because, in the first place, he did not like the look of his would-be client; in the second place, because he had already formed his own opinion on the matter, and believed Roussillon quite capable of all that

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

was imputed to him, and more, which is saying a good deal. And when the man was sent into retirement for a long term of years the only fault Bernardin found in the matter was that the sentence was not twice as long.

But Paris is a trying place for hot young blood, a furnace whose fires scorch and devour more than they cleanse; and, in spite of—perhaps to some extent as the effect of, or at all events in the rebound from—the strict training of his earlier years, Noel Bernardin, when he came to years of indiscretion, went the pace with the rest. His mother died just before his majority, and with her went the only possible brake on his fast-spinning wheels. But he had the worldly wisdom to keep the two phases of his life distinctly and wide apart. In the courts he was the clear-headed, strenuous advocate, who never lost a case if law and logic and infinite striving could win it. For the rest—well, perhaps the less said the better. He did as others did.

Gaudriol had written to him in Paris. The old man's heart was in this business. It was as tender a heart as one may sometimes find below a grizzled moustache and an official uniform. He liked Alain and he loved Barbe, and he was determined to see them through this business. He had his savings, for the possibilities of spending were small in Plenevec, and no opportunity had ever presented itself before by which he would get more enjoy-

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

ment out of his money. So he got Noel Bernardin's address in Paris from the clerk of the court at Plouarnec, and wrote to him begging him to undertake the defence of an innocent man on trial for his life.

Bernardin, by a fortunate chance, was holiday-making in the neighbourhood of Roscoff. He claimed the Île de Batz as an original discovery of his own, and found much entertainment in its beauties, natural and feminine; and few possessed a keener eye for both than himself. Gaudriol's letter followed him there, and he determined, good-humouredly, to run over to Plenevec and take a look at the matter, and see if it was interesting enough to amuse him. It was only a cross-country jaunt, and that bit of the coast was new to him. So the old Sergeant was delighted one afternoon by the sight of the elegant figure of M. Noel Bernardin strolling unconcernedly along the shingle, absorbing the local colour of Plenevec.

"Ah, monsieur, you do me too great honour!" said the old man, hastening up to salute the young one.

"You are Sergeant Gaudriol?" said Noel.

"At monsieur's service," with another salute.

"Your letter caught me at Roscoff, so I thought I would just run over and have a chat with you. Now, what's it all about?"

"If monsieur will do me the great honour of

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

accompanying me to my house I will explain it fully;" and they went in together.

"The facts are strong against you, my friend," said Bernardin at the end of a long talk. "They are purely circumstantial, of course, and inevitably so under the circumstances; but things don't look bright for your man. I know what country juries are: they always convict on circumstantial evidence sooner than let a crime go unpunished."

"I know it," said Gaudriol gloomily. "But this man is innocent, monsieur. I would stake my life on it."

"If the innocents convicted by country juries on circumstantial evidence could all return and haunt the men who condemned them there would be some pretty lively times," said the barrister, tapping his gold pencil between his teeth.

Was it worth his while to break into his holiday? After all, it was only the possible life of a common fisherman. There was not much glory in it at best, and if there was one thing he hated, it was trying to drive light into the dark brains of country jurymen. It was like driving nails into a fog. Then he had some big cases coming on which would take up all his time. No, on the whole, he did not think it was worth his while.

He was on the point of saying so when a tap came at the door, and in answer to the Sergeant's "*Entrez!*" Barbe Carcassone's face glimmered in

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

on them, and the slim girlish figure stood outlined against the sunshine outside.

"Come in, *ma fille*," said Gaudriol, as she stood hesitating at sight of the tall stranger. "It is of your affair we are talking. This gentleman can save Alain if he will——"

"Oh, monsieur!" and Barbe's great eyes rose to Noel's, blazing and swimming with the tumult of her feelings, and her hands clasped up towards him as though he were the Holy Mother herself.

Noel Bernardin's eyes dwelt on her with great appreciation. There was something worth looking at in Plenevec after all. He looked again into the dark eyes and the sweet, anxious face, and then he said, "*Bien!* I will undertake it. But, you understand," to Gaudriol, "it will not be easy."

Barbe ran to him and would have kissed his hand. "You give me life, monsieur. You give me hope. I was in despair. They will not even let me see him. I go each day, but they will not admit me. And he is innocent—as innocent as I myself——"

"We must prove it, mademoiselle. I will come back to-morrow, and you shall tell me all you know, and show me all these curious places. It is as strange a story as ever I heard"—and to himself he added, "and you are the prettiest girl that I ever set eyes on."

He went back to Roscoff, and thought all the way

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

of nothing but Barbe's lovely, eager face and those great eyes of hers into which a man's soul tumbled and lost itself; and all that day Barbe thought of him—when she was not thinking of Alain—and magnified him into a demigod, who had only to speak and stretch out his hand and Alain would be free. For the bitter knowledge still lay ahead of her that our earthly demigods are mostly made of clay.

I have seen Barbe Carcassone in later times, and even then there was a charm about her which is difficult to describe, but which haunted one like a dream. She had a sweet, oval face, in which the tender softness of the girl was just moulding into the firm, chaste lines of the woman. The cheekbones were, perhaps, just a trifle high, showing her Celtic origin; the brow was broad and placid, the nose straight and wonderfully delicate, the mouth just ripe, and the curving lips just full enough to indicate the feeling that was in her. When I saw them they met a trifle more firmly than they probably did at this time—before she had learned her lessons. But it was her eyes that held you captive, and never let you forget them. They were large, and of a very deep blue, black almost at times with the intensity of her feelings, and at times a velvety violet. They were rather deep-set, and looking into them, you thought of dark, shaded pools in whose depths you might surprise the glimmer of

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

quiet stars. There was in them at all times—when I saw them—a trustful glow which made for the rekindling of one's faith in humanity, and a quiet appeal which was infinitely pathetic and touching: the wistfulness of a girl who seeks to know, with the tender depth of the woman who has known. She was only a peasant girl; but there have been queens with infinitely less grace and few with greater beauty.

Noel Bernardin had seen his share of beautiful women. He had had his tender thoughts of them, and more. But Barbe set his blood on fire as no other woman had ever done; and, far from attempting to fight the flame, he fed it with both hands.

He went back to Roscoff that first day very full of thought. Perhaps he was pondering the points of the case he had undertaken. Perhaps he was thinking of other things. "*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" he murmured more than once. And again, "What a find!" And yet again, "But she is incredible!"

Strange, indeed, that so meek and quiet a thing should kindle so fierce a fire in so experienced a man! But it was so. Barbe's fresh young beauty swept him like a devouring flame; and before it all his higher feelings, his early training, his self-control, disappeared like a drop of water on a red-hot bar. Perhaps the strange chance that had thrust her thus upon him had something to do with

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

it. God knows, opportunity brings about as many a fall as inclination or intention.

He rode over again next day, having secured a horse from the hotel at Roscoff, and had another long interview with Sergeant Gaudriol and Barbe; but I doubt if his knowledge of the case was greatly increased thereby, for he was looking at Barbe most of the time and thinking of her all the rest.

No one, however, could be two minutes in Barbe Carcassone's company, and discuss the case of Alain Carbonec, without seeing that all her heart was given to that fortunate unfortunate, and that every hope of her life was bound up in him; and so Noel Bernardin saw that he must tackle the matter from a business point of view. So he flung himself heart and soul into Alain's case, as was his way with whatever he undertook; and in this case a twofold cord drew him swiftly on. Conflict was life to him; a fight against odds, when he had faith in his cause, a great and fierce joy; and in this case he promised himself a fee commensurate with his services—a fee beyond the capacity of Sergeant Gaudriol's bank account to pay—a fee *du diable*.

Day after day he rode over to Plenevec, till he knew everything that was to be known which bore in any way on the case. He learned all about Cadoual and Pierre and Alain and Barbe, and their relations one with another. He went down into the great cavern with Loïc Breton, and marvelled

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

at what he saw there. Under Barbe's guidance he inspected Cap Réhel from the top and from the bottom, and wormed himself after her into the cavern under the stone, and subjected it to the minutest scrutiny, but found nothing that had escaped the previous searchers. The fee he would demand depended on his winning his case, and he spared no pains to that end; and day by day, and hour by hour, the fire within him burned more fiercely, till at last the flames broke out.

It was only three days to Alain's trial. Noel Bernardin and Barbe Carcassone had been viewing the way by which Alain had been in the habit of scaling the cliff from the sea, and Bernardin had shuddered at thought of anything without wings going either up or down.

"Sit down here and listen to me," he said, when they had done, and his eyes burned on her face; and, all aflame as he was, he found it difficult to begin when Barbe's innocent wells of truth rose to meet the fire of his own.

"What is it, then, monsieur?" she said with a gasp, for his voice and his look startled her.

"You want me to save Alain Carbonec?"

"*Mais, mon Dieu, monsieur!* Can you doubt it?"

"Well, I will save him if man can save him. But—my fee will be a high one."

"Anything, monsieur—everything in our power,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

if you will only give us time to pay it. I would give my soul for Alain."

"It's not your soul I want. It is you yourself—you."

"*Comment, monsieur!* I myself? *Mon Dieu!* what can you mean?"

"I want you, Barbe, you yourself, all to myself."

"But, *mon Dieu*, monsieur! I belong to Alain."

"It is no good belonging to a dead man."

"But Alain is not dead."

"He will be unless I save him."

She stared at him wild-eyed—the horror of it biting into her heart like an icy tooth, and her blood chilled as his meaning forced itself upon her.

"Well?" said Bernardin. "What do you say? Is he to live or die?"

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" and she rocked to and fro in her anguish for Alain and for herself. "Will no less satisfy you?"

"Nothing less. I want you, Barbe—you. You have set me on fire. You will come to Paris with me——"

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

"Everything you want shall be yours, and of the best that money can buy: dresses and jewels, horses and carriages—everything. My God!" he blazed, "there is no woman in all Paris to compare with you."

"I want only Alain—Alain!" she wailed.

THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

"And I want only you. I will save Alain to get you. I won't save him for you."

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" she moaned, and cast herself on the turf at his feet, and clawed at it with her trembling little brown hands. "Spare us, monsieur, spare us! . . . All our lives we will bless you . . . and we will work to pay off the debt."

He sat down beside her, and put his hand gently on her shaking shoulder, which shook the more at his touch.

"See, Barbe!" he said. "I cannot help it. You have possessed me body and soul. I would go through hell itself to win you."

Her *coiffe* had slipped—she had bent to the fashion since she had come to live on shore—and the dark hair rippled out from its confining cap. His wandering fingers touched it caressingly. His whole body shook, and the wind whistled in through his nostrils. He held his breath as though he held something else in with it, and she shivered and crept along the earth away from him.

Perhaps some touch of the better nature that was somewhere in him rose at sight of her utter desperation. Perhaps the violence of his passion upset his brain for a moment.

"I will marry you, Barbe," he said hoarsely. "You shall be my wife!" and at the moment he meant it, for at the moment there was no thing in

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

heaven or earth that he desired but the lovely young thing that lay there under his hand.

"I shall die," moaned Barbe.

"On the contrary," he said, coming back to himself, "you shall begin to live and learn what life is like. Now, listen to me, Barbe! You shall swear to me by the Holy Virgin that you will speak of this to no person whatever, and that when Alain Carbonec is free"—Barbe shivered and moaned again—"you will come to me at my bidding."

"Swear it!" he said again, as she remained prone and silent.

"*Eh bien!*" and he got up, "then, as sure as you live, Alain Carbonec's head goes into the basket;" and he turned to go.

She heard the pressure of his foot on the turf. It was the foot of Death striding on Alain. Her white face rose and looked after him in mortal agony. She scrambled to her knees—to her feet—and ran after him—ran after him to pluck back Death from Alain at a price at which Alain would not care for life. But to her the one thing was to save his life—even at the cost of her own. And she said to herself as she ran, "When Alain is free I will throw myself into the sea. I will kiss him once when he is free, and then I will throw myself into the sea."

"I will swear!" she panted behind Bernardin.

He turned and took her two hands in his and



THE TRYING OF BARBE CARCASSONE

looked into her twisted face. "By the Holy Mother?" he said.

"By the Holy Mother!"

He bent and would have kissed the brown hands, but she snatched them from him and bent and sped away along the hillside like one who had sinned, and shunned the sight of man; and Bernardin stood and watched her, and then turned and went on into the village.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

ALL Plenevec went to Alain Carbonec's trial; and if the jury had been drawn from the Plenevec men Barbe's heart might have been eased of part of its fears. But the trusty panel was all Plouarnec, and Plouarnec knew not Alain, and sat there proud and grim, with determination in its conscious eye, prepared to do its duty to the last letter of the law, and with perhaps somewhat of a bias against the accused, or at all events a leaning towards the belief that if he were found guilty the reproach of an undiscovered crime would be wiped out.

When the court had taken its place with all due ceremonies, Alain was led in by the same two gendarmes who had arrested him that day at Plenevec. He was pale still, but no longer pallid. He seemed, in fact, in better bodily case than when he first issued from his prison in the rock. His bearing was easy and confident, as of a man satisfied of his own innocence and trustful of the law to give him justice. The unjust imprisonment by his

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

fellows had tried him less hardly than the nerve-shattering experiences of the caves.

His eye swept round the room and settled instantly on Barbe's. A smile of pleasure flashed into his face, and Barbe's pale face filled responsively with momentary colour. But it passed and left her pale and anxious as before. Noel Bernardin sat with a face like a hawk, and waited for the fray to begin. He looked once at Barbe, and then sat back in his seat and watched the jury.

"Tell me your name, your age, your profession, and where you live," said the president of the court to Alain.

"Alain Carbonec, twenty, sailor, Plenevec."

"Listen to the charges brought against you."

The clerk of the court proceeded to read them.

"You have heard the crime of which you are accused," said the president. "Answer clearly the questions I shall put to you."

"I am ready, monsieur. I have committed no crime, and I have nothing to fear."

"We shall see. For the present confine yourself to answering my questions. You knew George Cadoual?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"On what terms were you with him?"

"On good enough terms at first. We were partners in the boat."

"And afterwards?"

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Not so good. He was not too easy to get on with."

"You quarrelled?"

"Occasionally, of course."

"What did you quarrel about?"

Alain hesitated.

"Answer," said the president.

"*Eh bien!* monsieur, it is known. We both loved Ma'm'selle Barbe of Grand Bayou;" and Barbe jumped at the mention of her name and went momentarily red again.

"And which of you did the young lady favour?"

"Myself."

"You are sure?"

"Quite sure, monsieur."

"Did you ever come to blows?"

"We have done."

"Why?"

"He used insulting words about her one night, and I struck him."

"What words?"

"Monsieur . . . I wiped them out. . . . They are forgotten."

"*Bien!* You had other reasons for hating Cadoual."

"I do not think so."

"He found out your real name, and told Pierre Carcassone who you were."

"That is true. But I did not know it till he told

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

me so himself—in the cave, you understand. He told me that and other things to try and make me angry enough to kill him.”

“How then? He asked you to kill him?”

“He was in terrible pain—all his bones broken, you understand—and he cried to me night and day to kill him and end his trouble.”

“And how came he there with all his bones broken?”

“That, monsieur, I do not yet understand. He told me it was he who threw me into the cave. But I did not believe him, for I could not see why he should be there himself in that case.”

“How did you think you got there?”

“Candidly, monsieur, I thought it was Pierre Carcassone who put me there;” and Pierre in the audience smiled grimly.

“Ma’m’selle Barbe’s father?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“And why should he put you there?”

“I do not think he wanted either of us. You see, monsieur, Cadoual being there too made me think it must have been some one else who put us both in there. If I had been alone I might have believed it was Cadoual who did it; but I could not see why he should be there, too, if he did it himself.”

“Quite so. Very ingenious. And how do you suppose he got there?”

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"That I know no more than how I got there myself, monsieur. I swam ashore from the Light after returning the boat."

"Why had you taken the boat?"

"To take ma'm'selle ashore."

"You had carried mademoiselle away from her father?"

"Yes and no, monsieur, if you will permit me. Pierre, you see, said he was not her father, and if that was so he had no right to keep her."

"Who did he say was her father?"

"He said she was the daughter of Paul Kervec, whom I then heard of for the first time as *my* father."

"He said you were sister and brother, in fact?"

"Exactly, monsieur."

"But you took her away all the same."

"As her brother I had better right to care for her than a man who said she was not his daughter, and who hated the man whose daughter he said she was."

"And did you believe she was your father's daughter?"

"*Mon Dieu!* no, monsieur, not for a moment."

"Why?"

"We did not feel to one another like that."

"But you took advantage of the position to remove her?"

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

"Assuredly. Would you not have done the same?" which raised a ripple in the court.

"Don't trouble yourself about me. It is you who are being tried—for your life, remember. Now, continue. You took back the boat; you swam ashore. What next?"

"I climbed the Cap by my usual road, and went along the Head among the stones. The next thing I remember I was lying in darkness with great pain in the head, and then by degrees I came to myself, and found I was in the upper cave among the doves' nests."

"And Cadoual?"

"I knew nothing of Cadoual. It was two days before I found him in the cave below, with all his bones broken."

"And when you found him?"

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur! I did what I could for him, as any one else would have done. I bound him together as well as I could. The leg and the arm and the head I could manage, but the break-ages inside his body I could not get at and could not understand."

"He was stabbed in the throat."

"That was later. He suffered horribly, and begged me night and day to kill him and put him out of his pain. That I could not do, of course. I fed him and gave him water and did what I could. Then one night when I was tending him he plucked

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

my knife from my belt and stabbed me in the back—here”—and he put his hand up behind under his right shoulder-blade—and then plunged it into his own throat.”

“That is a strange story. Do you expect us to believe it?”

“It is the truth, monsieur.”

“You say he told you it was he who threw you into the cave.”

“He said that when he wanted to make me mad enough to kill him.”

“Did you believe him?”

“I did not. I believed he said it only to anger me.”

“Do you believe it now?”

“I do not know, monsieur. It is possible. I know absolutely nothing of how I came into the cave.”

“You know there is a cave under the menhir on the Head?”

“We found it the day I got out of the cave.”

“You had never seen it before?”

“Never, monsieur. If there is an opening from it into the lower cave, that is doubtless the way I was thrown in. It could not have been by the way I came out.”

“There is such an opening.”

“Ah! then that explains that part of it.”

“And you cannot explain how Cadoual got into the cave?”

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

"No, monsieur, I have no idea."

"However you got in," said the president insinuatingly, "the rest is simple enough and not unnatural. Each of you thought the other had put him there, and you fought about it. Was it not so?"

"No, monsieur. Cadoual was in no condition to fight; he was in pieces."

"He was able to stab you, however?"

"It was his last effort. The pain had crazed him. He had made up his mind to die. I would not kill him, so he tried to kill me as well as himself."

"And you can cast no further light on the matter?"

"None, monsieur. I have told all I know."

The surgeon was called who had examined both Cadoual's body and Alain's wound. He stated that the breakages of Cadoual's bones and head were the result of a fall from some great height.

"And the wound in the throat?" asked the president.

"That, of course, was from a knife."

"From your observations would you say it was caused by another or self-inflicted?"

"It is impossible to say for certain. Ordinarily, however, a blow from one in front would land on the left side—that is to say, the side facing the right side of a right-handed man."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

"Is the prisoner right-handed?"

"He is."

"And if Cadoual had inflicted the wound himself it would ordinarily be on the left side also, would it not?"

"Ordinarily yes, but not invariably so."

"Or, again, if the prisoner had struck round from behind?"

"It might fall anywhere, of course."

"Quite so. What do you say about prisoner's own wound?"

"It could not possibly have been self-inflicted. It is a blow from above downwards. It ripped open the shoulder-blade and went in below."

"Supposing they had fought together?"

"Then prisoner must have turned his back to receive the blow. Moreover, it is impossible Cadoual could have fought. Almost every bone in his body was broken."

"Could he have made such an exertion as prisoner states?"

"As a supreme—a final—exertion, he might."

"The wound in prisoner's head?"

"It might have been from a fall or from a direct blow from behind. It would produce slight concussion of the brain."

"Can you incline one way or the other—to the fall or the blow?"

"I incline to the blow, for this reason: a fall



THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

down an incline, such as I understand is the alternative, would produce an abraded wound, tending up or down, according to whether he fell head first or feet first. This blow shows no such symptoms. It was a blow straight from behind, straight in towards the centre of the head, so to speak."

"How soon would such a blow produce unconsciousness?"

"Instantly, and it might last for hours or days."

"So that a person receiving such a blow could do nothing after it?"

"Not until he recovered consciousness."

"Returning for a moment to Cadoual's wounds: could a man so broken inflict such a wound as that in prisoner's head?"

"Certainly not—not after he was broken."

The president intimated to the surgeon that he had finished with him; but as he was stepping down Bernardin desired to ask him a question.

"You examined the body of Cadoual. Had any attempt been made to cure his breakages?"

"Yes, undoubtedly; and it caused me great surprise. The arm and leg had been, and indeed still were, tightly bandaged to keep the broken bones in position."

"Could Cadoual by any possibility have done that himself?"

"Not unless he was left-handed, and then I doubt if his broken ribs would have allowed him to do so."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

A score of voices in the audience exclaimed that Cadoual was right-handed, and the president threatened to clear the court.

The evidence so far was in prisoner's favour. So, evidently, was popular feeling.

Madame Cadoual, a smouldering volcano in black, was briefly examined, and stated that her son and prisoner were on bad terms because of that girl at the Light. Her son had started one morning for Landroel to do some business, and she had never seen him again till his body came ashore. She had employed detectives from Paris, and they had given it as their opinion that Alain Carbonec was responsible for the murder. She never took her eyes off Alain, and they flamed and blazed as though they would scorch him out of existence.

One of the Paris detectives—the other was man-hunting in Algeria—told of their researches in and round Plenevec, and how they had come to the conclusion that the missing man was the murderer. But when Bernardin took him in hand the smart gentleman from Paris had a bad five minutes. With questions that struck like blows in the face, the barrister ripped to pieces the other's assumptions and laid bare the poverty of the land.

“Can you produce one single iota of fact that you yourself discovered which in any way connects Alain Carbonec with the death of George Cadoual?” asked Bernardin in a scornful voice.

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

"The fact that Carbonec disappeared on the very same day as M. Cadoual—" began he from Paris.

"We know all about that. Nothing else? Thank you. I will not detain you;" and the detective regretted he was not in Algeria with his colleague.

Then: "Pierre Carcassone!" called the president, and Pierre stepped forward and took the oath.

"You objected to prisoner coming to the Light after your daughter?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You forbade him to come?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"But he continued to come all the same?"

"He did."

"And in the end—what?"

"I took my own way of separating them."

"You did not know the prisoner was Paul Kervec's son?"

"Not till Cadoual told me."

"And then?"

"I made use of it. I told them they were brother and sister."

"That was not true?"

"*Mon Dieu*, monsieur!"—with a shrug—"it might have been. It was good enough to use, anyway."

"Prisoner, however, took advantage of the rela-

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

tionship you ascribed to your daughter and himself to take your daughter away?"

"He did."

"He took her away in the lighthouse boat to Plenevec. What happened when he came back with the boat?"

"We quarrelled. He jeered at me for what he called the failure of my plan, and told me I had lied."

"And you?"

"I struck him."

"You fought?"

"No. He went away down the ladder and swam ashore."

"And you?"

"I followed him as soon as I got the boat down."

"What was your idea in following him?"

Pierre hesitated, and then said in a quiet, matter-of-fact way, "I intended to kill him."

"Well? Continue."

"He was ashore before I got there. He dressed and climbed the Head, and I followed him."

"You climbed the Head? Continue."

"It was new to me, and I was a long time after him. When I reached the top I could not see him at first. Then of a sudden I caught sight of his head coming up out of a hole in the ground close by one of the stones. His back was towards me, and I lay down behind another stone and watched."

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

"What did you see?"

"His head was bleeding. He seemed stupid. He looked about till he found his cap; then he kicked the grass and bushes about with his feet, and then he went into the hole again."

"How long were you behind him?"

"It might be a quarter of an hour or more."

"The surgeon tells us Carbonec would be unconscious for a considerable time after the blow he had received."

"I know nothing about that. I tell you only what I saw."

"After that?"

"He did not come out again, and I went away, and got back to the Light."

"Now, tell me; did you, while quarrelling with prisoner, tell him who gave you the information as to his name and parentage?"

"I did. It slipped out."

"What did he say?"

"He said I was a fool and Cadoual was a bigger one."

The president had done with him. But Bernardin had not.

"You come here," said he, "telling us that you tried to separate Carbonec and your daughter by a lie which you knew to be a lie——"

"It was as likely true as not," said Pierre gruffly.

"When you brought the children ashore eighteen

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

years ago, after murdering the father of the one and the mother of the other, you took them to Sergeant Gaudriol and said, "This is my child, and this is his. Is it not so?"

"*Ma foi*, monsieur! Eighteen years is a long time to recall one's very words."

"Have you ever during these eighteen years hinted, in any way or to any one, that Barbe was not your daughter?"

"I never had occasion to do so."

"And you wish us to believe that for eighteen years you have fed and cared for the child of the man you murdered?"

"She was useful to me."

"For many years she could not possibly be useful to you, and you could easily have got some one who would have been, and who also would not have had the disadvantage of being Kervec's child."

To that Pierre had nothing to reply beyond a shrug.

"You say you climbed Cap Réhel from the sea, and went back the same way. Doubtless you can show us whereabouts you climbed, and could do it again. I ask the court to send you in custody of two gendarmes and an officer of the court to climb it again in their presence. If you succeed and come back alive— But you will not. Your mouth is full of lies. When Sergeant Gaudriol went over to the Light to inquire into the disappearance of

THE TRIAL OF ALAIN CARBONEC

Carbonec you told him you had not seen him when he returned with the boat. Was that true?"

"Obviously not, in view of what I have stated."

"You lied to an officer of the law in the pursuit of his duty?"

"He was trying to fix on me a crime I had not committed."

"So you lied to him?"

"He showed he did not believe me."

"It is to his credit. No sensible man would believe you. I have here," said Bernardin, "the record of your daughter's birth, which took place six months before you parted with your wife when you started on your last voyage to Newfoundland. This story of Barbe being Kervec's daughter was a lie, and you knew it to be a lie, and used it simply as a means to an end—namely, the getting rid of Kervec's son, whom we know as Alain Carbonec. Your evidence now given is a lie from beginning to end—with the same end in view. You come here with a mouthful of lies, capped by the statement that you followed Carbonec with the intention of killing him, and you expect the jury to believe a single word you say. Faugh! You are rotten—putrid. In the sight of all honest men you stink. In the sight of God——"

"Gently! gently!" said the president.

"It is not easy, M. le President," said Bernardin with warmth, "in the presence of carrion such as

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

this—come here to swear away the life of an innocent man to satisfy an old grudge against the father——”

“May God strike me dead,” cried Pierre, foaming at Bernardin’s words, “if——”

Then, in the sight of all of them, his eyes fixed wide in a stare of frozen horror on something behind the barrister—something which was invisible to any but himself. His face grew white, and then the colour of lead. The arm he had flung up in vehement assertion dropped to his side. He swayed for a second, and fell with a crash like a falling tree. When they picked him up he was dead.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GOLDEN WAY

YOU may find twenty men this day in Plenevec who saw Pierre Carcassone fall and die, and they tell of it yet with bated breath. For, you understand, one does not see the good God stretch out His hand like that every day in the week—happily for some folk!

The court adjourned while the doctors gathered over Pierre's body like birds of prey, and debated as to the actual cause of his death. But if all the doctors in Christendom had proclaimed it anything whatsoever other than that which it so manifestly was—the direct reply to Pierre's blasphemous challenge—no single man in Plouarnec or Plenevec would have listened to them. For doctors are but men, after all, and this was the finger of God. It was like ants arguing about a thunderbolt, as Noel Bernardin tersely put it when he got over the first shock.

Barbe had sat through it all, growing colder and colder, till her very heart was chilled with fear,

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

and her face was like the face of a Madonna carved in white marble. She did not believe a word of what Pierre said; but she saw how terribly it must tell against Alain if the jury believed it. And she sat with her dark eyes fixed on them, and learned every line of their faces, and saw them in her dreams for many years after. Bernardin's voice rang in her ears. His fiery words stirred her heart and chilled it, for every word brought the end nearer. She heard the crash of Pierre's fall. They told her he was dead, and in spite of the horror of it, and in spite of herself, her heart cried, "Thank God!" and the colour came slowly back into her face.

Alain had stood watching her until Pierre's lying evidence forced his attention. Then he watched Pierre, and his eyes blazed as he saw the net the unhappy man was trying to weave round him. He was watching him intently to the moment when he fell. And when they told him he was dead his heart, too, cried, "Thank God!" For it seemed to him that God had indeed spoken for him.

All the time the doctors were discussing Carcassone, Noel Bernardin sat with his arms folded, staring before him with gloomy eyes which saw not. It was his attack that had provoked the man to his death; but it was not of Pierre Carcassone he was thinking. He did not give one thought to him.

When the court met again, an hour later, the

THE GOLDEN WAY

president intimated that the prosecution would call no more witnesses.

"I call Sergeant Gaudriol," said Bernardin quietly. "My client is innocent, and I will prove his innocence beyond all questioning. He was very pale, and spoke very gravely, and was evidently labouring under strong emotion.

The old Sergeant stepped up.

"You searched the cave under the stone on Cap Réhel. What did you find there?"

"These," said Gaudriol, and produced from a cardboard box three cigarette ends, a ring of wax on a flat stone, and Alain's stocking-cap.

"Tell the jury, if you please, what these things tell you."

"The cigarettes are the same as George Cadoual smoked, and no one else in Plenevec could afford them."

Ordinarily the president would have said, "Yes, the prisoner took them from Cadoual's pocket and smoked them after felling him." Gaudriol was prepared for that, and waited for it.

"Continue," said the president.

"M. Cadoual always smoked with a holder," said Gaudriol. "His humour was such that he could not smoke as others do. If he tried he bit the cigarette to pieces. If you wish, M. le President, you can have twenty confirmations of both these facts."

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

The president only bowed and murmured, "Continue." He had had enough of the business, and desired only to see the end of it.

"If M. le President will have the goodness to examine those cigarette ends, he will see that they have been smoked with a holder."

The fag-ends were handed up to the president, who glanced at them and passed them to the jury.

"I say, therefore," said Gaudriol, "that it was George Cadoual who was in the habit of using that cave—not Alain Carbonec. Next I produce a ring of wax, the remains of a candle—that is it, M. le President. I found that also in the cave. The wax is similar to the candles used in the Cadoual household. It is of a quality used nowhere else in Plenevec. M. Cadoual, therefore, had light in his cave."

M. le President might have had something to say on that head also; but he only bowed wearily and said again, "Continue."

"This," said Gaudriol, handing up the blood-stained cap, "is Alain Carbonec's cap. The dark stain is the blood from the wound on his head. He was struck from behind, probably by a stone, dragged into the cave, and flung through the opening in the long passage into the lower cave. Why and how Cadoual came to follow him, God only knows."

THE GOLDEN WAY

No word from the president, and Sergeant Gaudriol's evidence stood unopposed.

The prosecution declined to address the jury, and Bernardin took the same course. Without leaving the box the jury pronounced Alain Carbonec "Not Guilty," and the two gendarmes fell back and left him a free man.

A buzz of satisfaction ran round the court; but the sense of what had just happened was upon them all, and it scarcely rose above a murmur.

Alain strode across to Barbe and took her white face between his hands, and looked into her eyes, and kissed her on both cheeks. He thought the strained whiteness of her face, on which her eyes looked like two great black stains, arose from the shock of her father's sudden death.

There was only one man in the room who knew what it meant, and what anguish of heart lay behind it; and he rose quickly, and his face was almost as pale as hers, and he spoke through his clenched teeth. He came straight to them, and took Barbe's cold little hand in his, and felt the agonised throb beat through the coldness of it as she lifted her heavy eyes to his and waited his pleasure.

"She is yours, Carbonec," he said, and the sharp ring of his voice was gone, and it came huskily through his teeth. "God has spoken. Take her, and be very good to her," and he placed Barbe's

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

hand in Alain's and turned and went. And Alain never knew why Barbe reeled and almost fell. He had turned to load Bernardin with his thanks for all he had done for him, when the twitch of Barbe's hand drew him to her. Before he looked up again Bernardin was gone.

Morally, Bernardin had been guilty of an atrocious wrong, but it was never accomplished. At the very moment when the prize for which he had been willing to sell his soul was in his hand, God spoke and turned him from his purpose. I like to think that, even without that, he might, when it came to the point, have refused the sacrifice to which Barbe had pledged herself. And I like, too, to think that perhaps his training at Merchiston and the Scottish strain in his blood might have helped towards that end.

Of the depth and strength of his feeling for Barbe there could be no doubt. Years afterwards, when he had attained to a high position in the land, and was happily married and had his children growing up about him, I have seen him fall suddenly silent at a casual mention of Barbe Carcasone's name; but I had seen Barbe myself, and I was not surprised. One did not soon forget her.

The Plenevec men gathered round Alain and Barbe, and gave them hearty congratulation, and Barbe's face was no longer white, for all the

THE GOLDEN WAY

warmth of the new-given life beat in it and shone through her eyes.

"And who tends the light to-night?" asked Sergeant Gaudriol, returning from an ineffectual chase after Bernardin.

"*Ma foi!* I forgot the light," said Alain.

"I will tend it," said Barbe valiantly.

"I go with you," said Alain.

"But no," she said, with a charming timidity, "that could not be, Alain."

"*Allons donc,* you two!" cried the jovial Gaudriol, beaming on them like a ferocious tiger who sees his meal approaching. "Come straight away to the Maire, and we will have you married at once, or something else will be coming between you. The good God intended you for one another from the very first, and we're bound to help Him if we can."

The neighbours in their enthusiasm clapped the official uniform on the back, a thing no man had ever dreamt of doing in his life before, and Gaudriol did not resent it.

Alain looked at Barbe with a great eagerness in his eyes; and Barbe looked up into them, and putting her hand trustfully into his, said, "I am ready;" and the neighbours shouted aloud and streamed out in a vociferous throng to the Maire's office. And, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, M. le Maire consented to marry them on the spot, and did so, and thereby saved himself

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU

from possible indignity and the smashing of his windows.

The sun seemed hesitating for his evening plunge when the crowd which escorted them came crunching down the shingly beach at Plenevec. Perhaps, after all, he was only waiting to see these two, who had suffered so much, and were at last united, and desired to add his mite to the proceedings. He did his best, and it was up a shimmering pathway of gold that Alain Carbonec rowed his bride home, while all the people stood on the beach and watched them go.

Barbe waved her hand to them and then turned her face to the Light and to her husband, and Alain saw nothing of the black throng behind, but only the face of his girl-wife; and her face shone in the glory of the setting sun, as it had shone that other morning in the glory of the rising sun. But, then and always, there was in it for Alain a glory and a brightness that no suns could put there, and which shone for him in foul weather as in fair, and shone for him alone.

Barbe sat quite still, with her hands in her lap, till they had passed out of the bay and were approaching the Plenevec side of the Pot. Then she kicked off her unaccustomed shoes and drew off the suffocating stockings, and the little round toes worked comfortably. And Alain, with a joyful laugh, drew in his oars and stepped cautiously



THE GOLDEN WAY

over to her, and knelt before her, and kissed first her feet, and took advantage of her jump of alarm to fold his arms about her and draw her down to him in the bottom of the boat. And he kissed her—hair, and eyes, and ears, and mouth, and shielding hands and arms, everywhere where a kiss could be planted.

“Little sister! Little sister!” he cried. “You are mine, mine, mine—the gift of the good God——”

“The good God has been very good to us, Alain,” she said, all rosy red with joy at his vehemence.

“We will never forget it,” said her husband.

THE END.



Builer and Tanner The Setwood Printing Works Frome and London



|

